THE LITERATURE OF THE VICTORIAN ERA

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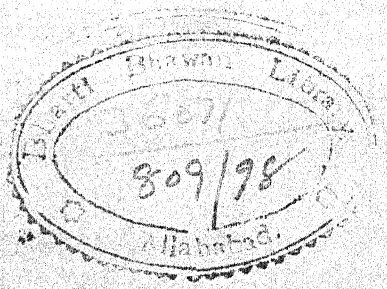
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THE LITERATURE OF THE VICTORIAN ERA

BY

HUGH WALKER, LL.D., D.LITT.



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PREFACE

THE purpose and scope of this book will be rendered plainer by a glance at the table of contents than I could hope to make it here, except by anticipating what will be found in the following chapters. And as nobody is likely to be interested in the reasons which led me to undertake the task which is now, at last, ended, if not accomplished, I should be disposed to write no preface at all. But it is my pleasant duty to thank those who have been good enough to help me in my work. I am greatly indebted to Professor Henry Jones, of Glasgow, and to Professor T. Stanley Roberts, of Aberystwyth, who each read part of the manuscript, and made valuable suggestions. Mr A. R. Waller, of Peterhouse, read the whole of the proofs with a patience and care for which, as I can make no adequate acknowledgment, I must thankfully rest his debtor. For the errors and shortcomings of the book as it now stands I, of course, am alone responsible. That the errors are not more numerous and the shortcomings greater is due to the generous help of the three men whom I have named.

I have dealt only with writers who have passed away. The task of selection from among the living is peculiarly invidious; and the death of Swinburne and of Meredith has greatly reduced the temptation to cross the line which divides the two worlds.

HUGH WALKER.

LAMPETER,
December, 1909.

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This summary is intended to be used closely with the text of the book: without reference to the text the classification would in many cases be misleading. The order is the order of treatment in the book. Where for any reason a writer has been dealt with along with a group to which he does not naturally belong, the fact is indicated by the use of square brackets. If however the connexion be close, though the writer may not be strictly within the group, brackets are not used.

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

THE NEW AGE

At the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria the English nation grew "drunk with sight of power." There were miles of warships gathered at Spithead; feudatory princes from India and representatives of free peoples ruling over territories such as had never before owned allegiance to a single flag were assembled to do homage to the aged sovereign. The newspapers whose "frantic boast and foolish word" gave utterance to the feeling of the nation, and the nation from which those newspapers took their spirit, were not without excuse. But suddenly, upon ears still ringing with the blare of trumpets and hearts still elate with the proofs of material power, there fell the arresting voice which proclaimed the insufficiency and the evanescence of all such power:

> "Far called, our navies melt away;
> On dune and headland sinks the fire:
> Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
> Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!"

No more masterly expression was ever given to that sense of reaction which follows upon feverish activity and exalted hope. That such reaction must come is a law of life, and it is also a law that its depth must be proportional to the exaltation which has gone before. The mightier the wave, the greater and the more desolate is the stretch of naked shingle its reflux leaves exposed. All history shows that just as a physical stimulant exacts payment in the shape of a subsequent depression, so the

moral or intellectual stimulant must be followed sooner or later by a temporary lowering of spiritual vitality. The example of a St. Francis of Assisi for a time lifts his followers to a height altogether beyond the reach of the ordinary world; but literary satire and the sober documents of history are at one in their testimony that in the sixteenth century their successors had sunk below that world's level.

We see the same law at work in political history. The magnificent panegyric which Thucydides puts into the mouth of Pericles stands in sharp contrast with the laments of Demosthenes a century later for the want of those very qualities which the great historian represents as the special endowment of his countrymen. Both conceptions of the Athenian character are probably just: they are certainly the conceptions of the men best qualified to discover the truth and to express it accurately. But if so, is it not probable that the depression was largely due to reaction from the abnormal energy of the earlier Athenians? A still more familiar instance is to be found in the history of England. We know how deep and sincere were the moral earnestness and the religious feeling of the Puritans; and we know likewise the price which was paid when the Restoration relaxed the strain.

The same principle unquestionably holds in literature; and, as the artistic is the most sensitive of all types of human character, it would not be surprising to find the principle exemplified there more strikingly than anywhere else. We cannot ascribe to accident the fact that in the literatures of Greece, of Spain, of France, of England, the dominant forms have varied from age to age. Now the drama prevails, now the lyric, now the novel; in this generation poetry, in that prose; one century addresses itself mainly to the understanding, another to the imagination. It is no mere coincidence that chivalric romance has so prevailed in Spain, the land of the romantic conflict of Moor and Christian. There is more than bare chance in the fact that the golden age of the drama, *par excellence* the literature of action, was contemporaneous, alike in Athens and in England, with the period of highest political and individual energy; or again in the fact

that when England was arrayed in hostile camps we have on the one hand the cavalier literature of *persiflage* and on the other the lofty strain of Milton.

After each of these times of activity there has followed, in literature as in national life, a period of depression, sometimes, but not always, succeeded by a fresh revival. For Athens, after the glory of the drama and of history had passed, there still remained the glory of philosophy and of oratory. In Spain, the eclipse of romance was permanent. In France, the great age of Louis XIV passes into the lower phase of the Encyclopædia, only to revive again in the marvellous burst of political life in which she led, and of literature in which she shared with, the rest of Europe. In England, the many-sided activity of the Elizabethans changes into the factional spirit of Cavalier and Roundhead, and that again sinks with the debasement of the court and of society into the ribaldry and license of the Restoration drama.

The same spectacle of rise and fall meets the eye when we turn to the great age of the French Revolution and compare it with the period immediately after its force was spent. No one can doubt that the Revolution was for Europe in general, both in national life and in literature, a time of heightened energy and productiveness. For more than twenty years the sword was hardly ever sheathed, and the whole Continent shook with the tramp of armies. It is true, war in itself is not productive; but De Tocqueville's *L'Ancien Régime* shows that the political ideas which set the armies in motion were eminently fertile. And who can doubt that in literature the thirty years or so during which "the gospel of Jean Jacques" swayed the thought of Europe were among the most productive in the history of the world? But when we look a generation forward, we see once more innumerable evidences of decline. War is exhausting; and in 1815 the nations found themselves the richer by a prisoner whom they feared even in captivity, and the poorer by hundreds of thousands of lives, by countless millions of money, and by multitudes of shattered hopes. For however clear it might be to De Tocqueville that the ideas of the Revolution were still

alive, for the moment its failure seemed to be complete, and the fascinating vision of liberty, fraternity and equality faded into the light of common day.

England had suffered from the great struggle far less than the continent of Europe. She had never felt the pressure of hostile armies on her soil, and for her the measureless waste of war had been in great part made good by the extraordinary development of her commerce. Yet even in England the reaction after the war was severe. Prices were high; the artificial stimulus to trade was gone; the evils inherent in that industrial revolution which had been in progress for half a century were becoming more conspicuous; and there was as yet little or no factory legislation to check them. Moreover, the poor law has never, either before or since, been so unwisely administered: it was sapping the manhood of the nation, pauperising the poor, demoralising the well-to-do. There were bread-riots. Necessary and inevitable political reforms were delayed till, as the Duke of Wellington warned the nation, the choice lay between concession and civil war. In truth, the state of things was not far removed from a state of civil war. The windows of Apsley House were broken by an infuriated mob; there was a crisis when troops and artillery were held in readiness to sweep the streets of London; the Chartist movement grew; that warlike spirit in the civilian, which in the opening years of the century had been directed against a foreign foe, was now absorbed in contemplated civil strife. "You should have the like of this," said a young lawyer equipped as a volunteer to Thomas Carlyle. "Hm, yes," was the reply; "but I haven't yet quite settled on which side." The continuance of such a social state meant the death of hope, which is as indispensable in literature and art as Bacon knew it to be in politics.

A time of stress and strain, far from being inimical to literature and art, is in the highest degree stimulating, provided the ferment is due to the leaven of great ideas and of ennobling conflicts. The greatest periods of the world's literature have followed upon such times. The effect is due, not to the turmoil, but to the operation of the ideas which occasion the turmoil, or which are evoked by it. But there is nothing dignified, nothing vivifying,

in the social struggles of England during the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. So far, then, as the outward and visible circumstances of national life are concerned, we should not be surprised to find those decades to be a period of comparative sterility. And such is in fact their character. But this phenomenon of rise and fall in literature is so universal, and is in itself so interesting, that it may be not amiss to examine it more carefully and to attempt, in some measure at least, to account for it.

In the first place, it is to be observed that the phenomenon is by no means confined to literature. At one time the whole stream of life seems to flow on in a single triumphant and irresistible current; at another the movement is slow, uncertain, purposeless, as if in some "backwater of the soul." The facts of history, and especially of literature, often suggest the analogy of the life of the individual. We seem to see years of growth, years of highest energy, years of decline, just as we see the individual man wax and flourish and wane. The explanation is doubtless to be sought in the rise and decay of ideas. Though the stream of human life flows on, unlike the life of the individual, in a steady and equable volume, those ideas which, like the winds, agitate its surface or stir it to its depths, are variable. To their appearance and disappearance is due the semblance of the kind of change which marks the individual life. When a dominant idea or group of ideas is in full vigour, we seem to be as it were on the crest of a wave of life. But the interest sinks, the power lessens, the fervour is lost, the whole tone of life becomes lower. The race, we imagine, has aged, though the men are as young as they ever were.

We imagine so, and it may be the case. A nation which has marched in the van may fall permanently behind; it may pass into the winter of its days; and, with nations as with men, there is no following spring to renew the vigour of life. Rome went down before the onslaught of the barbarians because Roman life was already debased. It was not the ridicule of Don Quixote that killed Spanish romance, it was the disease already inherent in it. But in the case of a nation in normal social health and enjoying a vigorous spiritual life, it will be found that the times of apparent

decline in literature are really what we may call periods of germination. When the great French writers of the age of Louis XIV gradually passed away, they seemed to leave a vacancy; and no doubt for a time they did so. It was a vacancy never to be filled again by men of their stamp, men pursuing their aims or dominated by their ambitions. Molière, Corneille and Racine, the men who made the French drama, and who gave France her literary pre-eminence in Europe, died, the first in 1673, the last in 1699; but in no long time Voltaire and Rousseau, who did so much to determine the course of French history during the eighteenth century, were ripe to take their place; and already before the death of Racine, Bayle's *Dictionary*, that curious armoury from which so many of their weapons were drawn, was collected and arranged. The old descend to the grave with the laurels on their brow, and the world laments the loss; the young, with their laurels still to win, are already preparing to take their place; but the world will not and cannot take the laurels upon trust. It is a law of life that we know the greatest only when it is passing or has already passed away.

> "The gates of fame and of the grave
> Stand under the same architrave."

If we turn to England, we are confronted more than once in the not distant past by the same spectacle of rise and decline. Within a period of twenty-one years are recorded the deaths of Hume, Johnson, Adam Smith, Gibbon and Burke; and with them the eighteenth century in its literary aspect passes away. But again we see how the losses are made good. Wordsworth, Scott and Coleridge were all born before the death of the first of the men named; Byron, Shelley and Keats, before the death of the last. The work of these men may be said, with sufficient accuracy for the present purpose, to form the English contribution to the great romantic revival, or the Literature of the Revolution. They are separated from one another by very wide differences, yet the world is not mistaken in believing that they were stirred to work by common impulses, and that there are points of connexion between them which do not and cannot exist between

men of different generations. They were, sometimes in spite of themselves, children of the Revolution, and the ideas of the Revolution were fermenting in their minds.

When we look onwards once more some fifty years we see the old order changing; it is only faith, or else a glance at the productions of still more recent days, that assures us it is "giving place to new." It is plain that in the third decade of the nineteenth century the impulse given by, or at least associated with, the French Revolution rapidly failed. Whether it would have done so with such speed had the younger men survived, cannot be determined. But Keats died in 1821, Shelley in the following year, and Byron in 1824. The elder men had for the most part already done their work, and, except Wordsworth and Landor, they did not very long survive their younger contemporaries. So far as it is possible to fix a date, we may say that the period ends with the year 1832, the year of the death of Scott at Abbotsford, of Goethe in Germany and of Cuvier in France, the year after the death of Hegel, whose thought so profoundly influenced the nineteenth century.

The years 1825 to 1840 show a comparatively meagre list of memorable works. In the writings of the younger generation we have only a partial counterpoise to the loss caused by failing powers and thinning ranks among their elders. We can see in it numerous beginnings and rich promise, but the actual performance is poor beside that of the preceding fifteen years, which includes all that matters of Byron, the best of Scott's prose, and Miss Austen's, and all of Shelley and Keats, together with much of Coleridge and Wordsworth. But the true significance of the years after 1825 will be missed unless we bear in mind that they were the seed-time of all the rich literature of the early and intermediate Victorian era. By the greatness of that literature we must estimate the importance of the years in which it was germinating.

It is interesting to notice that the men who in England governed thought during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, conceived of their social and political relations with the immediate past as largely negative. The French Revolution

seemed to them to have failed. Some of them, like Carlyle, would have refused to characterise it as a failure absolute; but to others, like Tennyson, there appeared to have flowed little or nothing but evil from "the red fool-fury of the Seine,"—a phrase evoked, it is true, by a later revolutionary movement, but still descriptive, to its author's mind, of the earlier and greater one. In this respect England stood in contrast to the country of the Revolution itself, where faith in it and in its principles had been transmitted, almost as a religious cult, through all political changes. "He must take care not to touch my Revolution," is the phrase attributed to Thiers when he heard that Taine was engaged on the *Origines de la France contemporaine*; and the historian who quotes it adds: "By the expression 'my Revolution' the aged statesman did not refer to his own history of the change of things with which, as a youth, he won a front place in the brilliant literary group of the Restoration. He was giving expression to the sentiment cherished to the period of his death by most Frenchmen excepting the fanatics of Legitimism, that the Revolution was a sacred manifestation which might be diversely interpreted, but never profoundly assailed[1]."

There was a time when in England too the Revolution appeared to some a "sacred manifestation"; and their feeling can be traced momentarily in the verse of Coleridge and Wordsworth, permanently in that of Shelley, and in the political philosophy of his father-in-law Godwin. To others it seemed much more like a manifestation of diabolic power; and this view found unrestrained expression in the later writings of Burke, while it gave a tone to the work of Scott, and imparted a deeper meaning to that revived interest in mediæval history which he did so much to excite. But on all, on its opponents as well as on its advocates, the Revolution acted as a tremendous impulsive force. The intense political and military activity of the time seems to find an echo in the swing and the rush and the vigour which characterise the literature produced during those years. But before the close of the first quarter of the century all this was changed. There were not many who would have taken, with Burke, the diabolic

[1] Bodley's *France*, i. 83.

view of the Revolution; there were still fewer who would have accepted it as a "sacred manifestation." It had become a subject for study and criticism. The great victory which freed England from danger made it easier for the conservative side to take a moderate and dispassionate view, while reflection on the "fatal Saturnalia" of France chastened and sobered those who had at one time maintained that even a French invasion was a thing to be hoped for rather than to be dreaded. The fierce energy of opposition on the one side and the fervour of hope on the other were alike gone. If the Revolution had produced fruit, it was certainly not the fruit which enthusiasts had expected. What was immediately visible was the wreck of the *ancien régime*; and the task before men was to construct a new world out of the ruins of the old, not, as they had hoped, by the wave of an enchanter's wand, but by slow and painful toil. Hence, as has been said, the mental attitude of men towards the past was negative. The events of the preceding generation showed what was no longer possible in politics and society; it remained to discover what *was* possible.

But after two generations more we can see that while the outward failure of the Revolution was complete, its real failure was only partial. Modern democracy, a political development of absorbing interest because it is unexampled in history, had already taken its rise in America; but in Europe the movement towards it has been profoundly influenced by the French Revolution. What has been, and what is likely to be, the effect of this democratic movement upon literature? Few questions can be propounded that are better worth investigating. The supreme political interest of the nineteenth century is the picture it presents of an ever-widening harmony between order and freedom. The chief steps in this progress are clearly marked—in England, in the successive reform bills, in Catholic Emancipation, in the abolition of the Corn Laws, and in the various constructive measures which in later days have helped to humanise the lives of the industrial multitudes. Of special importance from the literary point of view was the enfranchisement of the press; for the abolition of the paper tax and of the stamp duty upon

newspapers was in effect an enfranchisement. Moreover, we too readily forget the numerous causes, trivial as they seem to us now, which less than a century ago exposed newspapers and authors and publishers to the risk of prosecution, and which, down to a far later date, brought less definite but no less real penalties on all who dared to think unpopular thoughts. Leigh Hunt was imprisoned from 1813 to 1815 for criticisms of the Prince Regent, whose chief fault was that they were scandalously true; and if these criticisms were injudicious, it might be pleaded in excuse that they were provoked by panegyrics which were scandalously false. The trial of Richard Carlile for "blasphemous libel" in publishing the works of Thomas Paine took place in 1819; and the sentence against Thomas Pooley, which roused the indignation of Mill and of Buckle, was pronounced in 1857. Later still, Huxley found it necessary to devote a considerable portion of his life to an effort to secure for himself and others unfettered liberty of thought. In the part of the field where he fought the battle has been won; but it would be rash to conclude that the evil has ceased to exist. Intolerance can be practised in the name of science as well as in that of religion, and recent trials have come perilously near to disputing the mature and sane man's right even to die except *secundum artem*. It is, however, certain that in this direction progress has been great and rapid.

What have been and what will be the effects upon literature of a political, social and intellectual development and enfranchisement such as this, are questions which have never been fully investigated. That these effects must be profound and far-reaching is obvious. The mere multiplication of the number of readers is a fact of great significance. More important still is the change in their social position, their ambitions, their training, their character. In the middle of the eighteenth century Johnson fought his desperate way—reduced at one time to living upon 4½*d.* a day—from the system of patronage to that of direct dependence upon a reading public. Carlyle, in the middle of the nineteenth century, saw in this fact the birth of the Hero as Man of Letters: "Much had been sold and bought, and left to make its own bargain in the market-place; but the inspired wisdom of

a Heroic Soul never till then, in that naked manner." And he proclaimed, as the greatest task before mankind, the problem of organising the chaotic profession of letters. The problem is still unsolved, the profession is still chaotic; and while the public has grown far wider and the dependence of the men of letters upon it has become more and more direct, the price of the Heroic Soul is as uncertain as ever. The problem which was too great and too complicated for the intellect of Carlyle remains too great and too complicated for his successors.

Can this state of things fail to exercise the profoundest influence? Even in literature the souls are few which serenely dwell apart, and it may be questioned whether we should desire them to be many. Shakespeare himself was not of the number. The majority of writers must always be influenced by a conscious or an unconscious consideration of the character of their audience; and though there is danger in the influence, there can be no danger comparable to that which attaches to the cutting of literature adrift from life and from reality. It is such freaks as the "metaphysical" element in poetry, or the fantastic romance satirised by Cervantes, which stand permanently condemned in critical judgment. Their practitioners suppose that they are addressing a band of the elect, and are apt to value themselves in proportion as they leave the common earth behind; but what has saved them, in so far as they have found salvation, has been their failure to attain their end.

But if there is good there is unquestionably evil as well in the present state of matters. Johnson thought that even in his time there lurked a risk to literature in the multiplicity of books. If so, the danger has vastly grown. In the introduction of slang, in roughness of style, in crudity of thought, sometimes in a certain vulgarity of tone, we seem to see the influence of modern conditions. Walt Whitman would have been impossible in an aristocracy, and Mr Rudyard Kipling must have undergone many changes. We are by no means destitute of examples of repose and dignity; but no one would single these out as characteristic qualities of recent literature. The great predominance of the novel, which is certainly connected with the character and

circumstances of the mass of readers, is not a matter for unmingled satisfaction.

Probably, however, the most serious danger arises from the absurd disproportion which may frequently be noticed between the quality of the work done and the magnitude of the reward reaped. Carlyle, the foremost man of letters of his time, was fain at forty-five to earn by lecturing, a task he loathed, the money necessary to make ends meet and to save himself from exile. Had he not possessed a private fortune Darwin could never have devoted himself to science. Browning for many years made nothing by his writings, and Matthew Arnold throughout his life made very little. Although Tennyson became the most popular poet of his day, he was compelled for ten years to suspend relations with Emily Sellwood, because he could not afford to marry. So low at the beginning of the period was the repute of poetry, the finest flower of literature, that Murray, the most liberal and the most enterprising of publishers, made it his rule "to refuse all original works of this kind[1]." Chateaubriand, a few years later, declared the only popular English poet to be "a political verse-writer, who was a working blacksmith"; and in 1841 John Sterling wrote to Emerson that there was not one man then living whose verse would pay the expense of publication. Sterling was wrong: then, or soon afterwards, Martin Tupper was drawing from £500 to £800 a year for *Proverbial Philosophy*, and the price which the English public ultimately paid to the author of this "inspired wisdom" was something like £10,000. Unfortunately there is no sign of improvement. The author of a new *Proverbial Philosophy* is as likely now as he was sixty years ago to receive £10,000, and the author of a new *Paracelsus* to receive nothing whatsoever. It is just as likely now as it was then that a new *Richard Feverel* will be neglected, and a new *Heir of Redclyffe* hailed as one of the greatest books ever written.

All the revolution in thought which we associate with the name of Darwin hangs upon the chance that the man who wrought it possessed a private fortune! Nothing else is required to prove how clamant is the need to reduce the present chaos to order.

[1] Smiles's *Memoir of John Murray*, ii. 374.

And yet, as Carlyle again insists (and he spoke from experience), there might be far worse evils than poverty in the lot of the man of letters. Worse infinitely was the sceptical and negative spirit of the eighteenth century; for literature in all ages must live by its ideas, or die from the want of them. And for the evils which democracy brings in its train will not compensation be found in the volume of life? If the results are not yet fully satisfactory, the reason may be that we have not yet learnt how to manage the forces which produce them. The poetry of Walt Whitman in America, the novels of Zola in France, and in England the sordid stories of the London streets, seem to be the work of men intellectually and artistically overburdened with their subject. But Dickens is a hopeful example of what may be done, and in the future men greater than he may make a yet greater use of their inexhaustible material. It is no light thing that the millions have now a place and an influence in literature, where a century ago only the thousands, and earlier still hardly more than hundreds had it. Here, no doubt, lies the task of the present and of the immediate future for literature as well as for politics. Goethe, with his usual insight, saw that only half the man could be developed unless he threw himself into the stream of life:

> "Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
> Sich ein Character in dem Strom der Welt."

Character is necessary no less than talent for the highest literature; and the stream of that life in which it must be fashioned flows now in the democratic channel.

In all this democratic movement we have entered upon the inheritance of the Revolution; but we have done so in an altered spirit. It is no longer the Revolution regarded as a "sacred manifestation," but the Revolution seen under the critical microscope. Principles which enthusiasts a hundred years ago regarded as self-evident, and their opponents as manifestly false, have proved to be eminently in need of interpretation. We have to ask how liberty can be reconciled with order, how far fraternity is consistent with the stern law of universal competition, what remains of equality when we have allowed for the infinite diversity

of faculties and of needs. Questions such as these form the substance not merely of systematic political philosophy, but of the work of "seers" like Carlyle and of poets like Tennyson.

But if literature has relations with politics, it has relations still more intimate and vital with the conceptions which underlie religion and philosophy. In order to understand the Victorian age we must ask here again what are the points of resemblance and of difference between it and the preceding generation; which of the fundamental ideas of religion and philosophy lived on into it; which of them were rejected, reversed, changed or developed.

In respect of religion, the relation of the Victorian age to the era of the Revolution is extremely interesting and curious. On a superficial view, it presents an aspect wholly different from that presented by politics; more closely considered, it is seen to be explainable by the same principles. The science of politics lends itself to compromise. Hence the extreme views inherited from the previous age blend and run together in a kind of amalgam which partakes of the character of both. But compromise is far less easy in ideas than it is in practical life; experience teaches rather that the tendency of a purely logical development is always towards extremes. On this principle we can explain what at first sight is so puzzling—the co-existence throughout the Victorian era of a powerful school of rationalism, the inheritor of the deistic spirit of the eighteenth century, with that Catholic reaction which manifested itself early in the nineteenth century, and whose influence is not yet exhausted.

The opposition of these two schools gives its supreme interest to the English literature of the nineteenth century; all else will be found in the long run to be subordinate. It is not the only case in history in which such an opposition has existed, nor is it the only case in which momentous questions have depended upon the result of the conflict. The most profoundly thoughtful of the recent historians of Greece has been struck with just such a contrast and conflict in the latter part of the sixth century B.C., and has depicted it in a few masterly paragraphs. Having told the story of the great struggle against the Persian monarchy, he proceeds: "We have now to see how another danger was

averted, a danger which, though it is not like the Persian invasion written large on the face of history, threatened Greece with a no less terrible disaster. This danger lay in the dissemination of a new religion, which, if it had gained the upper hand, as at one time it seemed likely to do, would have pressed with as dead and stifling a weight upon Greece as any oriental superstition. Spiritually the Greeks might have been annexed to the peoples of the orient[1]." He goes on to narrate how the age of Solon witnessed the beginning of a rationalistic movement due to "intellectual dissatisfaction with the theogony of Hesiod as an explanation of the origin of the world[2]"; the result being the birth of the Ionian philosophy. On the other hand, "men began to feel a craving for an existence after death, and intense curiosity about the world of shades, and a desire for personal contact with the supernatural"; and this craving "led to the propagation of a new religion, which began to spread about the middle of the sixth century[3]." This was the Orphic religion; and the antidote to it "was the philosophy of Ionia. In Asiatic Greece, that religion never took root; and most fortunately the philosophical movement—the separation of science from theology, of 'cosmogony' from 'theogony'—had begun before the Orphic movement was disseminated. Europe is deeply indebted to Ionia for having founded philosophy; but that debt is enhanced by the fact that she thereby rescued Greece from the tyranny of a religion interpreted by priests. Pythagoras, although he and his followers made important advances in science, threw his weight into the scale of mysticism; affected by both the religious and the philosophical movements, he sought to combine them; and in such unions the mystic element always wins the preponderance. But there were others who pursued, undistracted, the paths of reason, and among these the most eminent and influential were Xenophanes and Heraclitus[4]." To the men who "pursued, undistracted, the paths of reason," Greece owed her salvation. "It is not without significance," says the historian in summing up, "that, when the Orphic agitation had abated, Greece should have enshrined the

[1] Bury's *History of Greece*, ch. vii. § 12
[2] *ibid.* [3] *ibid.* [4] *ibid.* § 14.

worldly wisdom of men who stood wholly aloof from mystic excitements and sought for no revelation, in the fiction of the Seven Sages[1]."

There is not in all history a more exact parallel than that which exists between Greece in the sixth century B.C., when thus interpreted, and Western Europe in the nineteenth century A.D. The saying that "history repeats itself" is stupid, if we take it *au pied de la lettre*; but, read with intelligent freedom, it conveys a profound truth. Substitute for the Ionian philosophy the deistic philosophy of the eighteenth century, for the Orphic religion the Catholic Reaction, and the words written by the historian of the one may be applied with little change to the other. The springs of the opposing movements were in both cases precisely the same. The principal difference is that the danger in the modern case was far less, because philosophy was no longer staggering on infant limbs; but the danger did, and to some extent does still, exist.

There are few things more interesting in literature than the contrasts it so frequently presents; and there is nothing in recent literature which more demands or which will more richly repay investigation than the extraordinary contrast now in question. It goes deep down towards the roots of human nature, which demands satisfaction for the emotions as well as for the intellect. The investigation is necessary, if it were only because we are here in contact with one of the "idols" of the human mind, which, as Bacon long ago pointed out, tends to grasp prematurely at unity. We are prone to forget the wide diversity of human thought. We call certain ages, ages of faith, and others again, ages of reason. When they are employed with due care, the phrases are useful, and have their own important element of truth; but the danger is that they may be supposed to represent the whole truth and the exact truth. This is by no means the case. Patient investigation shows that in the very midst of the ages of faith there was plenty of the rationalising spirit, though from motives of prudence it might refrain from obtruding itself. We have only to look round and observe in order to become convinced that in what is usually

[1] Bury's *History of Greece*, ch. vii. § 14.

described as an age of reason there is abundance of the spirit which leads to belief in things beyond and above reason, or even in things contrary to it. It has always been thus, and thus, until human nature is radically changed, it always will be. We have laboriously constructed our system of the universe, we are convinced that we have solved its secrets, there is no mystery beyond which brings us to a pause. But

> "Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
> A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
> A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
> And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
> As old and new at once as nature's self,
> To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
> Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
> Round the ancient idol on his base again,—
> The grand Perhaps."

So it proved conspicuously at the opening of the nineteenth century. All the omens seemed to point to the early and complete victory of rationalism. It was in the very air. Not long ago the Goddess of Reason had been throned in France. She was the creature of a whole century of work by the ablest minds,—work attended, as it seemed, by the most triumphant results. Hume, with his calm, cold, clear logic,—Gibbon, "the lord of irony," "sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer[1]"—Voltaire with his piercing wit, his dangerous and deadly power of ridicule,—these were the typical spirits of the eighteenth century. The French Revolution was the tremendous birth which marked their triumph at its close. All forces seemed to be working in harmony towards one end. Science had begun her conquering march, and every fresh discovery with regard to the true nature and constitution of the universe appeared to make the old conception of man's place in it less and less credible. There was scarcely a human being but felt the influence of the forces at work. The ministers of religion themselves betrayed it in their conduct. The Church, it

[1] This passage was written before I had read Mr H. A. Beers's extremely able and interesting *History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*. I have let it stand, although I have since found that he has used precisely the same quotations in a very similar context.

has often been said, was asleep; and loud are the denunciations against the officials who permitted and shared the slumber. Certain it is that if the sheep looked up hungry they were not fed. But the denunciations are perhaps a little unjust. The clergy were, after all, only yielding to forces which hardly any were powerful enough to resist. Even when the tide was already on the turn, we find a poet so intensely spiritual as Shelley was, imagining himself to be, and loudly proclaiming himself, an atheist. Robert Owen the socialist, like Lucretius of old, held religion to be the great obstacle to human progress. And yet Robert Owen was a man filled with that enthusiasm of humanity which under other influences would have made him zealous, perhaps a fanatic, in religion.

No wonder that in such an atmosphere the vision of the clearest eyes was blurred and dimmed. Goethe was the wisest man then living in Europe, the one most likely to see the truth through the mists of futurity; and Goethe thought that the Catholic Church was doomed and could hardly survive long. Yet even as Goethe spoke, the Counter-Revolution was in progress; and towards the close of the century which was then beginning the greatest statesman of the mighty empire of united Germany received at the hands of the Catholic party the most damaging defeat of his life; while in France Thiers prophesied that the Republic would fall if ever it quarrelled completely with the Catholic Church. The quarrel has taken place, and one of the most interesting questions of the future is, what will be the issue? The causes of such reversions are obscure. The arguments of the Encyclopædists had not been answered. It is true, Kant had put philosophy on a new foundation; but it is a far cry from the Kantian philosophy to the dogma of the Catholic Church. Probably the explanation lies partly in the fact that the success of the rationalistic school had never been as complete as it appeared to the superficial observer. Even in France itself, men no longer believe that the Catholic Church had lost its hold on the people as completely as was once supposed. Though the Encyclopædists had carried with them the thinkers and the multitudes of the cities, it is by no means so clear that they had

won the rural population. But in the main we must be content to attribute the change to one of those silent and mysterious movements of thought of which we only feel the effects without being able to trace them to a cause. Both Lecky in his *History of Rationalism* and Leslie Stephen in his *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* remark how modes of thought pass away—and the latter adds, how superstitions revive—without direct proof or disproof. Beliefs draw their nourishment from the atmosphere of thought, just as truly as plants draw theirs from the air around them. And this doubtless is the element of truth in the common saying that certain ideas are "in the air." The mental conditions are favourable, and the ideas spring up and seed and multiply, like plants in a suitable soil and climate.

Not only did this movement give birth to a literature, not only did it influence far more than it produced; it is interesting also as an illustration of the close connexion between the most various manifestations of intellect. It is the most striking aspect of an all-pervading contrast. A multitude of other things, outwardly unconnected, are really in close affinity with this Catholic movement. All romanticism is, often unconsciously, cognate to it. The revival of Gothic architecture; the change in the spirit of poetry—the consciousness of the supernatural in Coleridge, the sensuousness of Keats, the feeling in Shelley of a spiritual element in all things, in the west wind, in the cloud, in mountains, seas and streams,—these were kindred manifestations. Above all, this Catholic revival was stimulated by, as it in turn stimulated, that imaginative sympathy with the Middle Ages, of which the most curious and in some respects the profoundest products are Kenelm Digby's (1800–1880) *Broad Stone of Honour* (1826–1827) and *Mores Catholici* (1831–1840). The former in its four books, Godefridus, Tancredus, Morus and Orlandus, as it were incarnates the cardinal virtues of the Middle Ages as they appear to the eye of a believer, and suggests, as effectively in its way as Carlyle's *Past and Present*, that the changes of modern times are by no means all improvements.

It was, however, Scott who gave the most powerful and the most vivid expression to this imaginative sympathy with the

Middle Ages. He was himself innocent enough of Popery, and would have been more astonished at the charge of Romanising than he probably was when Thomas McCrie denounced him for his picture of the Scottish Covenanters in *Old Mortality*. And yet we have testimony to his Romanising influence on the one side from Cardinal Newman, and on the other from that champion of Protestantism, George Borrow. The former in the *Apologia* notes the effect Scott's novels had in promoting in him a Catholic frame of mind; and the latter in the appendix to *The Romany Rye* denounces Scott as the man who had brought back to life again Jacobitism and Laudism and Popery. All were dead and buried, in the "home of lost causes" as elsewhere through England, till he called them from their graves. The so-called Oxford Movement, therefore, according to Borrow, was really a movement originating in the Waverley Novels. Carlyle, for his part, traces "spectral Puseyisms" to Coleridge; while others have suspected that Carlyle himself was not wholly unconnected with such phenomena. If he wished to keep his hands perfectly clean, he ought to have had no dealings with Novalis. Scornful as he was of Puseyism, when he insists that we go from mystery to mystery, that the age of miracle is not past, but that on the contrary there is miracle all around us, he is just giving expression, in his own language, to that which Puseyites were trying to express in theirs. There may be the widest possible difference in the degree of intellectual truth contained in the two forms of expression, but the kinship is none the less real. Both Carlyle and the Puseyites were in revolt against the reign of the logical understanding.

All these genealogies are instructive so long as they are taken only to indicate an affinity, but if they are pressed too far they become misleading. Notwithstanding Borrow, it is desirable still to treat the English phase of the reaction as the Oxford Movement, and to regard it, not as the effect of any single cause, but as one manifestation of a change in the human spirit so wide in its range that we might well ask where its influence is *not* to be found. We call it romance, and for the last hundred years romance has been everywhere. For example, the Manxman,

T. E. Brown, ascribes to it the rise of the spirit of nationality, and speaks of a suspicion, which is gradually becoming a belief on his part, that the intense national feeling of the Welsh and their determination to keep their own language are matters of the nineteenth century romance-movement. In the eighteenth century, he believes, the Welsh desired nothing more than to be thoroughly English[1].

The Catholic Reaction, then, is an integral part, or an aspect, of the great Romantic Revival. Both rest in the last resort on the sense of mystery surrounding human life; both are irreconcilably opposed to the spirit which regards the universe as explainable, or which would dismiss as outside our sphere that in it which cannot be explained. On the contrary, it is just the inexplicable which is important: nothing worth proving can be proved.

But philosophy also has to be listened to; for philosophy is not only itself a part of literature, but, like religion, it wields power far beyond the limits of its own domain. Besides, philosophy deals, more directly than anything else, with ideas; and in it the thought which in poetry or painting may only be seen as through a glass darkly, frequently comes into full view. Now, philosophy bears the same witness as religious thought to the two-fold current running through the whole intellectual and moral life of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, we find in it the various forms of rationalism, carrying on the characteristic and dominant thought of the eighteenth century. We find in particular the powerful school of the Utilitarians, disciples of Jeremy Bentham, but all owning the paternity of Hume, and essentially English in spirit as in origin. With them must be classed many of the physicists, especially those of the earlier part of the century. Cognate to them in some respects, though deeply coloured by the mind of France, are the Positivists, whose singular religion is, not perhaps a very profound, but certainly a very interesting manifestation of the human spirit. Kinship may be claimed for them also with the scientific evolutionists, Herbert Spencer, Darwin, and their followers; for the theory of Darwin

[1] *Letters*, Aug. 18, 1886.

took its rise from the speculations of Malthus, and the classical economists were all in more or less intimate relation with the Utilitarians. Further, the agnostic tendencies of the biological evolutionists are in harmony with the scepticism of the school of Mill. On the other hand, however, the fundamental conception of evolution has no place at all in the earlier phases of the utilitarian system, while it is the master-thought of the other great school which struggled with the Utilitarians and their allies for the allegiance of thinking men; and so supremely important is this conception in the thought of the century that disagreement with regard to it is of more moment than agreement in all other respects.

The greatest of the opponents of Utilitarianism went back for their inspiration to Germany. Not Hume but Immanuel Kant, the great thinker who was roused by Hume from his "dogmatic slumber," was their spiritual father. To describe them we must discard the adjective "utilitarian" and substitute for it "transcendental." The word is probably most familiarly known from the works of Emerson, but the thing it signifies inspires also the prose of Coleridge and of Carlyle. This too lets in once more that sense of mystery which is scarcely consistent with a conception of life as made up of pleasures and pains capable of being weighed and numbered, added, multiplied and divided. Through their transcendentalism the philosophers share, with the poets, the architects, the painters and the Catholic party, that very complex thing which we call the spirit of romance. So powerful, indeed, is the romantic strain that Höffding in his *History of Modern Philosophy* calls Hegel and the Hegelians "the romantic school." They, however, make a momentous addition to transcendentalism, the addition of the conception of development, which, more than anything else, has made modern thought what it is. Like all great conceptions it has a long history and springs from many roots; but, except Darwin, no single man has done so much as Hegel to establish its authority over the human mind. Hence in part the immense significance of that intellectual affiliation to Germany which must be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

THE GERMAN INFLUENCE: THOMAS CARLYLE

EVERY literature, says De Quincey, unless it be crossed by some other of different breed, tends to superannuation; and he points to the French as an example of one which has suffered so as to be, in his opinion, on the point of extinction, because it has "rejected all alliance with exotic literature[1]." Writing in 1821 he asks what, with this example before their eyes, the English should do; and he answers: "Evidently we should cultivate an intercourse with that literature of Europe which has most of a juvenile constitution." That, he adds, is the German literature.

The leaders of English literature have at all times acted in the spirit of De Quincey's advice; and, frequently as she is charged with insularity, England has been, in literature at least, far more willing than France to learn from foreign nations. While no modern literature is more richly original than English, it is also true that none is more deeply indebted to foreign influences. The great classical literatures of Greece and Rome have exercised a constant power which has been in the aggregate greater than that of all other external influences whatsoever. But besides, there has always been in concurrent operation some dominant force of modern Europe. In the period of Chaucer it was at one time French and at another Italian; in the Elizabethan period it was again Italian; in the eighteenth century, French. The almost fanatical dislike of Coleridge for all things French, and the

[1] *John Paul Frederick Richter.*

depreciations of De Quincey himself, are merely the reaction from an opposite excess. So strong had been the French influence that it almost made the greatest of English historians a writer in the French language; while Hume, another typical man of the eighteenth century, was so steeped in French opinions as to be deaf and blind to whatever was not in accordance with French canons of taste. Coleridge declared of him that he "comprehended as much of Shakespeare as an apothecary's phial would, placed under the falls of Niagara."

The advice De Quincey gave was only a way of stating and stamping with his approval what had already been done. More than twenty years before he wrote Wordsworth and Coleridge had made that journey to Germany the influence of which on the latter at least, and through him on England, was momentous. Circumstances had been weakening the hold of France upon the English mind. The events of 1789 and the years which followed shocked and alienated nearly all. Those who, like Wordsworth, faced the first excesses undismayed, were gradually estranged as one act of outrage followed another, and even if they were not horrified by bloodshed they were dismayed by the violence done to liberty in the name of liberty. The following of Burke therefore increased while that of Mackintosh diminished, and the long years of war between the two countries steadily widened the spiritual gulf between them.

The causes of estrangement, however, were by no means exclusively political: we have to take account also of the fact that the rising taste of England itself was of a kind which could not find its appropriate nutriment in France. The French genius had had its great period of romance in the past, and was destined to have another in the future; but it was through classicism, not through romance, that France in the eighteenth century had held sway over the English mind. The Gothic revival, which had been for some time in progress, was a thing alien from the French genius, while it found sympathy and encouragement in the rising literature of Germany. Not that it was due to Germany; rather Germany first borrowed from England, and afterwards repaid the debt. Macpherson's *Ossian*, Percy's *Reliques* and Walpole's

Castle of Otranto were all antecedent to the period of German influence upon England.

There are two periods of borrowing from the Germans, separated from one another by only a short interval. Before the middle of the eighteenth century it would be difficult to demonstrate any interest whatever on the part of England in the literature of Germany; in truth, for many years after that date such literature was commonly supposed not to exist. Carlyle quotes Père Bouhours' pregnant question: *si un Allemand peut avoir de l'esprit?* and records his negative answer. Our own Hume was no better. To the end of his life he coupled "the barbarians, Goths and Vandals of Germany" with those of Russia, and lamented that these two states should be rising in power, while the two most civilised nations, the English and French, were, as he believed, on the decline[1]. The Frenchman and the Scot had whatever excuse the Germans themselves could give. The great Frederick's ignorance of his native language is notorious. The works of Leibnitz were written in Latin or in French. In the vernacular there was, this side the Middle Ages, little literature except of the popular sort, and this is not likely of itself to attract a foreigner's attention. But a vernacular literature was quickly growing up, and in the latter part of the century England began to show interest in it by translations from Gessner, from Klopstock and from Lessing. The culminating point in this period came in the closing decade of the century; and among the names we encounter in connexion with it are those of "Monk" Lewis, Walter Scott and William Taylor of Norwich. The last named constituted himself especially the interpreter of Germany to England, and a German scholar of the present day has deemed it worth while to devote a special work to him and to associate his name with the "Einfluss der neueren deutschen Litteratur in England." Taylor translated indefatigably, from Bürger, from Lessing, from Goethe, and wrote a large number of reviews of German works which were ultimately strung together, chiefly, as Carlyle says, by the bookbinder's packthread, in that "jail-delivery," the *Historic Survey of German Poetry* (1830).

[1] Burton's *Hume*, ii. 497.

So far as this group of writers was concerned, the centre of interest in German literature lay in its most pronounced romanticism. *Goetz von Berlichingen*, *The Robbers*, and Bürger's *Lenore*, were among the works which most profoundly moved them. But had this been all the vogue would soon have passed. It was already on the wane when Scott's translation of *Goetz* appeared, its decline having been hastened by the pungent satire of *The Robbers* which appeared in *The Anti-Jacobin* two years before Scott's translation. "To have given Goethe anything like a fair chance with the English public," says Lockhart, "his first drama ought to have been translated at least ten years before. The imitators had been more fortunate than the master, and this work ...had not come even into Scott's hands, until he had familiarised himself with the ideas which it first opened, in the feeble and puny mimicries of writers already forgotten[1]."

Ghosts, and *diablerie*, and dramas like *The Robbers* were, however, only a part of the German influence in the earlier period. Just as Goethe, through *Goetz*, gave an impulse to Scott in the direction of the romances in verse and prose which filled his busy literary life, so by another stream of influence—what Carlyle calls Wertherism—he gave an impulse no less powerful to the Byronic school. Byron did not know German, but he knew something of Goethe's work and regarded him with profound admiration. In 1820 he speaks of him as "*the* greatest man of Germany—perhaps of Europe[2]"; and in 1821 he dedicates to him *Sardanapalus* as an offering from "a literary vassal to his liege lord."

Both these streams were merged and lost in the copious and powerful flood of the English literature of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. This earlier German influence is interesting and noteworthy, but scarcely for a moment did it threaten to become dominant. It could not do so. There was an English romanticism older than the romanticism of Germany; and the Germans themselves had borrowed from Percy and from *Ossian*, and above all from Shakespeare, before they began to give back by the hands of Goethe and Schiller. While we admit the truth

[1] *Life of Scott*, vol. i. chap. ix.

[2] Moore's *Life of Byron*, v. 320.

of Carlyle's assertion that *Werther* stands "prominent among the causes, or, at the very least, among the signals, of a great change in modern Literature[1]," it is well to remember that *Werther* itself was inspired by *Ossian*, and that Werther's dirge is borrowed from Macpherson. When De Quincey wrote the essay above quoted he felt, and rightly felt, that the borrowed element was of secondary importance; but he felt also that behind the "Goetzism" and "Wertherism" lay the solid substance of German thought, and that it was of first-rate importance. He wrote on the verge of the second period of German influence, which differed in certain very important respects from the first, and which, though less striking to the superficial view, in reality produced a far greater effect.

The connecting link between the two periods, both chronologically and by reason of the nature of his interests, was Coleridge. He was as decidedly romantic as the most romantic of the Germans, and he could handle the supernatural more exquisitely than any of them. But what he imported into England was not the spirit of *The Robbers*, or of *Goetz*, or of the balladists—that had been done before him: it was the spirit of German philosophy. In this field he was a pioneer. The poet-philosopher was led to the German philosophers by his perception of the fundamental identity between the spirit of the poetry and that of the philosophy of the eighteenth century, and his conviction that the Romantic Revival in poetry must come to naught unless it could justify itself to thought. Coleridge would hardly allow the typical verse of the eighteenth century to be poetry at all. He was fully conscious of its brilliancy: he called Pope's *Iliad* an "astonishing product of matchless talent and ingenuity[2]"; but he would by no means allow that even this made Pope a poet. And with regard to eighteenth century philosophy, in that *History of Metaphysics* which is one of the numerous books Coleridge did *not* write, Hume is "besprinkled copiously from the fountains of Bitterness and Contempt[3]."

We have learnt once more to respect "our indispensable

[1] *Goethe* (*Miscellanies*, vol. i.).
[2] *Biographia Literaria*, chap. i.
[3] Dykes Campbell, *Life of Coleridge*, 137.

eighteenth century" without ceasing to respect the Romantic Revival. That has amply justified itself; but in many of its earlier phases it was open to attack and stood in need of explanation. The frequently tumid rhetoric, the enchanted castles, spectres, blood and thunder of the early romanticists were things not in themselves admirable. The greater men speedily became ashamed of all that this machinery represented and of all that was associated with it. Goethe, once the leader of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, returned from Italy separated from it by a whole hemisphere of thought and feeling. Schiller in later years loathed the popularity of *The Robbers*. Coleridge himself shows everywhere by his infinitely more subtle handling of the supernatural his aversion from the crudeness and barbarism of the work of this period. His artistic instinct was always right; but it was not until he passed under the influence of Kant that he could explain the principle upon which he worked.

For a time Coleridge was completely dominated by Kant. He tells us that the *Critique of Pure Reason* took possession of him with a giant's hand[1]; and the marks of Kant's influence are stamped deep upon all Coleridge's prose works. *The Friend*, the various series of lectures, the *Biographia Literaria* and the *Aids to Reflection* initiated into the mysteries of the transcendental philosophy those who read or heard them. But it was the transcendental philosophy filtered through the intellect of Coleridge and enveloped in a Coleridgean mist as hard to penetrate as that which wraps the original. "It is," says De Quincey with truth, "characteristic of Mr Coleridge's mind that it never gives back anything as it receives it[2]." De Quincey accordingly undertook to play the part of mirror, and to clear away the mists which had hitherto dimmed the reflection. Unfortunately, if in Coleridge we suffer from obscurity, in De Quincey we suffer from a worse evil, tenuity of thought. Kant, passing through the mind of Coleridge, is transmuted "into something rich and strange": the mind of De Quincey reduces him to insignificance.

The importance of the Coleridgean influence is amply attested. Transcendentalism, as interpreted by Coleridge, at once justified

[1] *Biographia Literaria*, chap. ix. [2] *Works*, xiii. 90-91.

romantic poetry, and furnished the groundwork for a philosophy widely different from that of the eighteenth century, or from Utilitarianism. It appealed alike to the imagination and to the reason; and through different channels it reached poetry and art, philosophy and religion. The *Aids to Reflection* was read by few; yet it stirred some who afterwards stirred the nation. "To Julius Hare it appeared to crown its author as 'the true sovereign of modern English thought'; while some younger men, as yet unknown to the author—Maurice and Sterling among others—felt that to this book they 'owed even their own selves[1].'" Before Coleridge's Highgate throne passed nearly all the promising youth of England. He moulded modern English criticism, he coloured poetry through the next generation, and his impress is evident in the Oxford Movement.

That transcendentalism through which mainly Coleridge wrought these effects was a specially German birth. Though Goethe was the greatest man of letters in Europe, France, Italy and England had names which might reasonably be put beside those of Schiller and Richter. But all Europe had none to match with Kant, Fichte and Hegel. Their thought, filtered through the minds of poets (for Carlyle's mode of conception is essentially poetical), is the thing which most of all has given its special significance to the second period of German influence, and more than all else, except only the tremendous fact of the French Revolution, has given to the English literature of the last two generations its special tone. This thought has become so ingrained with our own that an effort is needed to realise the time when for England it did not exist. But in the early years of the nineteenth century even professional philosophers knew little or nothing about it. Edinburgh was in those days the chief focus of philosophic thought, and when in 1803 Thomas Brown undertook there to expound Kant's *Kritik*, he drew his information not from the original German, but from a French translation. Dugald Stewart's chapter on Kant proves that he, as late as 1821, was little better equipped. Their countryman, James Mackintosh, took Kant and Fichte with him on his voyage to India in 1806,

[1] Dykes Campbell, *op. cit.* 256.

but his writings show that his knowledge too remained superficial. Even Sir William Hamilton, wide as was his reading, did not go deep into German thought. The other great school, that of Bentham, practically ignored it. Bentham himself had reached maturity before the German influence began to tell. John Stuart Mill learnt German, but he admits that the reading of German logic went much against the grain with him, and he bases his theory of induction upon Hume, practically ignoring Kant.

The important fact, however, was that an intellectual intercourse had been established between England and Germany, and for his share in that work William Taylor deserves to be gratefully remembered. Eager young men made pilgrimages to Weimar. One, Thomas Lovell Beddoes, too much neglected in this as in other respects, made Germany his home for more than twenty years. He went, it is true, primarily to study medicine, but he carried with him a poet's heart, and his judgments, though whimsical and inconsistent, are worthy of attention. He advises his friend Kelsall by all means to learn German; "its literature," he says, "touches the heaven of Greek in many places[1]." He puts Goethe above Schiller as superior in originality. He calls *Iphigenie auf Tauris* "a poem faultlessly delightful[2]," but adds with regard to the author, "I never felt so much disgust or much more admiration for any poet than for this Goethe[3]"; which recalls Carlyle's impatient exclamation in the throes of the translation of *Wilhelm Meister*: "Goethe is the greatest genius that has lived for a century, and the greatest ass that has lived for three[4]."

Beddoes, however, lived and died unknown. The really efficient intermediary between the mind of Germany and that of England was Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), and it is not less for this fact than because of his own intrinsic greatness that Carlyle is the best introduction to the literature of the Victorian era. No one else touches it at so many points; no one else combines in the same degree the vital principles of poetry and of prose; no one else did so much to make it what it was. And not the least important aspect of the German influence is the fact that, if

[1] *Letters*, 57.
[2] *ibid.* 60.
[3] *ibid.* 61.
[4] *Early Letters*, ii. 114.

Carlyle revealed Germany to England, Germany revealed Carlyle to himself.

What, then, we must ask, was the source and nature of the new power which Carlyle imparted to literature? So intimately are all his works and his whole spiritual nature bound up with his early surroundings that for answer some reference to them is essential. Born on the edge of the wild moorlands of southern Scotland, brought up in the stern Calvinism which was still dominant there, the rugged son of a rugged sire, Carlyle bears upon him to the end the deeply graven marks of his early life. One might imagine that as his father's chisel shaped the stones for the bridges and the houses of his native district, so by those very strokes, strong, true, decisive, he shaped course by course the years of his son's life. And the son's aspiration that he might build as well as his father built has been gratified; for his books are as it were piled from blocks hewn from the granite. He wandered far enough away from the conceptions and beliefs of his simple kindred; but the essence of all that made Thomas Carlyle may be traced back to that little village of Ecclefechan. People ask whence came Carlyle's strange style. Notwithstanding its German colour there is evidence for the belief that it is just the nervous speech of his father lighted by the rays of genius; and it has an unmistakable kinship with the vigorous, racy, native eloquence of many a Scottish peasant of the olden days, before his vernacular began to decay, and with it his power of dry humour and biting satire and thunderous denunciation. Whence, it is asked, came Carlyle's humour? Whence came the humour which serves as the salt of all Scottish literature from Dunbar and Lyndsay and Knox himself down to Burns and Scott? Whence came his moral earnestness and his religious belief? It is, as has been well said, just Calvinism without the Christianity; and no one familiar with the character of the two men will doubt that John Knox had much to do with the shaping of Carlyle.

Carlyle went out into the world. He went to the "worst of all hitherto discovered Universities," locally situated at Edinburgh. There, but especially in that Collection of Books which he declared in *Hero-Worship*, and repeated long afterwards in the *Inaugural*

Address in Edinburgh itself, to be "the true University of these days,"—there he accumulated the knowledge indispensable to his subsequent career. There in particular he made acquaintance with that German literature which, next to his family and his native country, did most to form his mind. With this mental freight, as all the world knows, he retired after a troubled interval to Craigenputtock, the German leaven working wildly in his Scottish soul. At Craigenputtock he remained for six years, there he wrote *Sartor Resartus*, there he brooded over the French Revolution, there in a word his genius grew to maturity. It was the complete and perfect Carlyle who migrated to London in 1834; and the broad Scotch accent was but the outward symbol of the fact that this stormful personality, who came to combat, and then to astonish, and ultimately to dominate the Metropolis, had been begotten in far different surroundings and nourished under far different influences.

Carlyle's was a life of the spirit, not a life of events. From his migration to London until his body was borne away for burial among his kindred in the kirkyard of Ecclefechan, his one home was No. 5, now No. 24, Cheyne Row. But a perverse fate has attended Carlyle beyond the grave, and it is impossible wholly to ignore the controversy which, for twenty years, has raged around his character more fiercely than it has ever raged round any one else in the annals of English literature.

Himself one of the most skilful of biographers, a historian who viewed history as in principle biographical, a philosopher who sought the key to the great problems of human society in the lives and actions of heroes, Carlyle inconsistently enough condemned biography as applied to himself, and many times expressed the wish that no life of himself should be written. It became obvious, however, to himself, as it always was to others, that this wish could not be gratified; and when his sister, Mrs Aitken, told him that many would write biographies of him, "there was," says one who was there, "a 'far-away' look on his face, and he said softly, as if half in soliloquy, 'Yes, there will be many biographies[1].'" There have been many biographies. No

[1] Wilson's *Froude and Carlyle*.

poor rag of reticence has been left to him who of all English writers most fiercely denounced the morbid curiosity and pruriency of those who sought to penetrate the privacy of others' lives. And by a curious irony the chief sinner, he to whom the whole commotion is due, was Carlyle's own chosen literary executor, Froude.

So far as Froude fell into error in his handling of Carlyle, his mistakes seem to have sprung mainly from three sources. He had to delineate a man with an extraordinary gift of humour, and he was himself destitute of that quality. Carlyle, though he could not write verse, was a poet, and, superb artist as Froude was in prose, he had little or no poetic gift. In the third place, Carlyle had a command of vivid words and telling phrases unequalled in his own generation and unsurpassed by any one who has ever written in English; and Froude never learnt to make adequate allowance for the exaggerations into which this gift constantly betrayed its possessor. For Carlyle was fully conscious of the power which his humour and his command of language gave him, and he enjoyed their effects. He was the most brilliant conversationalist of his time. Occasionally his tongue, as the phrase goes, ran away with him; and Darwin records how, after every one at a dinner party had been made dumb by a harangue on the advantage of silence, "Babbage, in his grimmest manner, thanked Carlyle for his interesting lecture on silence." But few wished Carlyle to stop. The most distinguished of his contemporaries listened enthralled by his eloquence and by his originality. "The waiters and ostlers at inns," he says of Burns, "would get out of bed, and come crowding to hear this man speak! Waiters and ostlers:—they too were men, and here was a man[1]!" Such scenes could be paralleled from Carlyle's own life. The servants who waited at tables where he dined ran from the room choking down their laughter at his bursts of humour. His phrases could sear like hot iron, or illuminate like a sudden burst of sunshine. This power of phrase-making is among the greatest of literary gifts. Many of Carlyle's epigrams are inimitably racy; sometimes they are pregnant with a wisdom shared by many,

[1] *Heroes and Hero-Worship.*

but consummately expressed only by him. Jewels of description, especially descriptions of persons, are lavished on his letters and journals: Mazzini is "a small, square-headed, bright-eyed, swift, yet still, Ligurian figure; beautiful, and merciful, and fierce[1]"; Tennyson is "a fine, large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-coloured, shaggy-headed man;...dusty, smoky, free and easy[2]."

The dangers of this gift of language are sufficiently obvious. Carlyle repeatedly succumbs to temptation, studying effect more than truth, and sometimes ruining effect through exaggeration. Mill is a man of aridities and negations; Newman has not the intellect of a moderate-sized rabbit. As a rule, such exaggerations may be passed over as of trivial consequence, but sometimes they are serious. The tremendous civil war in America was to Carlyle merely "a smoky chimney which had taken fire," and his view of it was unfortunately published in the *Ilias Americana in Nuce*.

Perhaps the instance just adduced is the least pardonable of all Carlyle's aberrations of this kind. Usually his phrases are either harmless in themselves, or else the offence is palliated by some quality of the expression. Sir Henry Taylor tells how Carlyle received the doctor sent to him by Lady Ashburton with a volley of invectives against his profession, declaring that "of all the sons of Adam they were the most eminently unprofitable, and that a man might as well pour his sorrows into the long hairy ear of a jackass." Taylor acutely remarks that "the extravagance and the grotesqueness of the attack sheathed the sharpness of it, and the little touch of the picturesque,—the 'long hairy ear,'—seemed to give it the character of a vision rather than a vituperation[3]." But the best of all illustrations of this point is to be found in the story which Mr David Wilson quotes from Madame Venturi. The quotation is rather long, but it does so much to set right what Froude has put elaborately wrong, that it is worth making:

"I was sitting," says Madame Venturi, "with Mrs Carlyle in the drawing-room one day, when—owing, I think, to the error of

[1] Froude's *Life of Carlyle*, iii. 454.
[2] *ibid.* iii. 190.
[3] *Autobiography*, i. 332.

a new servant insufficiently impressed with the inviolability of the 'silent apartment,'—an unfortunate German gentleman was shown up into that sanctuary, at a moment, as it afterwards appeared, when the Worker therein was even especially unable to endure interruption. Mrs Carlyle, hearing the step of an intruder pass the drawing-room door and ascend the stairs beyond, gazed at me with a face expressive of horror, and, running to the door, inquired anxiously of the servant whom she had shewn into the presence.

"'Oh, it is all right,' said the unconscious sinner, 'for the gentleman had a letter of introduction'; a reply which increased her mistress' dismay. After a very few moments we heard the precipitate steps of the unfortunate German stumbling down the stairs in full retreat; we heard the house door closed with a loud bang, and we saw from the window the ill-starred intruder rushing down Cheyne Row as if desirous of vanishing as rapidly as possible from a scene of disaster and defeat.

"Before we had time to compose ourselves, Mr Carlyle entered the room like a living thunder-clap: he in no way acknowledged my humble presence; I do not think he looked at me; he certainly addressed himself neither to me nor to his wife, but apparently to the adverse Fates as, raising his eyes and his clenched hands to the ceiling, he passionately asked—what had he done that God Almighty should send a d—d German all the way from Weimar for no earthly or human purpose but to wrench off the handles of his cupboard doors? The tragedy of manner, voice, and gesture, was worthy of Œdipus, and the unconscious comedy of the words, so ludicrously out of all proportion to the subject-matter, and to the fierce glare of his magnificent eyes, that I burst into a fit of the most irreverent laughter, which I found it impossible to restrain even when he turned upon me with the look of a lion about to spring upon and rend his prey.

"A moment's pause followed, during which I continued to laugh, while Mrs Carlyle looked ready to cry; he then inquired with much scorn, 'And pray, what does this little lady find to laugh at?' Making a desperate effort to control myself, I gasped out that it really did appear to me to be an exceedingly undignified interference with human affairs on the part of God

Almighty, to despatch even the most insignificant citizen of Weimar all the way to London on so very paltry a mission as that of wrenching off the handles of anybody's cupboard door. The extreme absurdity of the incident itself then seemed to strike him as forcibly as it had struck me, and he laughed at his own share in it as cordially and heartily as I had done; and to our earnest inquiry whether the unfortunate German was a lunatic, answered that he 'believed the poor soul was at least as sane as himself.'

"It appeared that the luckless visitor had arrived at a moment when Mr Carlyle was undergoing much mental *Sturm und Drang* over the intricacies of his subject, and it was clear to us, after listening to his calmer account of the matter, that he had received the poor man with icy coldness; had taken from him the introductory letter in silence, and, after reading it, had uttered no word of welcome or even of comment; had, in fact, simply looked at him and said, 'Well, sir, proceed!' The unfortunate *missionary* from Weimar rose in great embarrassment, saying that he feared he had called at an unfortunate moment, and offering to retire. Mr Carlyle, who seemed, in relating the scene, to be perfectly unconscious of the cruelty of his own part in it, had shewn his approval of the proposal by rising from his seat. The 'silent apartment' was octagon in form[1], the doors of the cupboards were similar in size and shape to the entrance door, and when that door was shut, indistinguishable from it. The German, eager to escape, attempted to turn the handle of one of the cupboard doors. It was locked, and in his confusion he had, in very truth, wrenched the handle off. The same thing happened on his next attempt, and then Mr Carlyle pointed out his only exit, saying severely, 'That, sir, is the door.'"

"He laughed at his own share in it as cordially and heartily as I had done." The words ought to be borne constantly in mind as the corrective to Froude's solemn treatment of Carlyle's grotesquely exaggerated complaints, objurgations and denunciations. The artist in words is carried away by his own power, just as an athlete will perform feats of strength for the mere pleasure

[1] A mistake on Madame Venturi's part.

of doing them, or a spirited horse will gallop round a field from sheer delight in his own speed. We may be sure too that Mrs Carlyle understood perfectly how to reduce the words to the ordinary power of human speech. Not only was she an extraordinarily clever woman, but she was a coiner of phrases almost as vivid as her husband's, and characterised by a similar exaggeration, sometimes at his expense. Caroline Fox quotes her as saying that "Carlyle has to take a journey always after writing a book, and then gets so weary with knocking about that he has to write another book to recover from it[1]"; and the same journalist quotes Sterling as her authority for the statement that Mrs Carlyle played all manner of tricks on her husband, and told wonderful stories about him in his presence, he vainly trying to interrupt, until he was forced to join in the laugh against himself.

Carlyle's deep and ready sympathy must also be remembered as a corrective to Froude. "No doubt he is a son of Gehenna," Froude himself tells us he would say, when remonstrated with for charity to some scoundrel, "but you can see it is very low water with him." If he heard a tale of sorrow he could not rest till he knew all about it and saw whether it was or was not within his power to cure or to mitigate it; and sometimes, with that end in view, he showed a simple-minded impulsiveness which was at once comical and touching. Tennyson[2] tells how, "having heard that Henry Taylor was ill, Carlyle rushed off from London to Sheen with a bottle of medicine, which had done Mrs Carlyle good, without in the least knowing what was ailing Henry Taylor, or for what the medicine was useful." And a whole life of kindliness to humble neighbours lay behind the admiration of the omnibus conductor who said to Froude, "We thinks a deal on him down in Chelsea, we does"; and when he was told that the Queen had just offered the "fine old gentleman" the Grand Cross of the Bath, added, "Very proper of she to think of it, and more proper of he to have nothing to do with it. 'Tisnt that as can do honour to the likes of he[3]." There is something

[1] *Journals*, ii. 21.
[2] *Life of Tennyson*, i. 334, n.
[3] Froude's *Carlyle*, iv. 434.

to be set against even the charges of impatience and irritability, though there is better foundation for these than for most of the others. In 1849 Carlyle travelled in Ireland with Charles Gavan Duffy, and the testimony of his companion is that during a tour of six weeks there was "of arrogance or impatience not a shade" on Carlyle's part.

No man of letters has ever been subjected to a more unsparing and uncharitable scrutiny than that which has been turned upon Carlyle; and yet as the smoke of battle rolls away and the dust settles, it becomes more and more clear that he was not only in essentials noble, like his books, but good and kindly and lovable in the little things of daily life as well. His faults have been viewed under a magnifying-glass, and he has borne the blame of many which were not his. His life was not happy: there needs no Froude to tell us that: the portraits by Watts and Millais and Whistler tell it far more convincingly. The cause of the sorrow written on that most pathetic face was partly the almost life-long indigestion which wrung from him the exclamation that he could wish Satan nothing worse than "to try to digest for all eternity with my stomach[1]." A deeper cause was those domestic troubles which Froude does not invent, though he exaggerates and completely misinterprets them. The Ashburton unhappiness was a reality, but neither Carlyle nor Lady Ashburton was responsible for it. The cause lay in Mrs Carlyle's mind; and she in turn was only responsible in the sense in which Carlyle was responsible for the condition of his stomach. But the deepest cause of all was his genius. Carlyle would never have agreed with Dryden that great wits are near allied to madness: on the contrary, he nobly defines genius as "the clearer presence of God Most High in a man[2]." But as the divine has appeared most manifest on earth in the person of the Man of Sorrows, it need occasion no surprise that this "clearer presence" proved, in Carlyle's case, incompatible

[1] C. Fox's *Journals*, i. 220.

[2] *Past and Present.* Carlyle is credited also with the stupid definition of genius as "an infinite capacity for taking pains." What he really said was that genius "means transcendent capacity of taking trouble *first of all*." (*Frederick*, Bk. iv. ch. iii.)

with happiness. He himself warns men that what they ought to seek is not happiness, but blessedness. Every page of his writings bears witness that he was not one who was born to be at ease in Zion. Each of his books was the fruit of birth-pangs which seemed almost to threaten life itself; to each in succession he travelled through an ever-lengthening "valley of the Shadow of Death." Surely not the least of the legacies he has left to posterity is the lesson afforded by the stubborn courage with which he faced the rugged road he had to traverse.

Turned from divinity by "his grave prohibitive doubts," and barred from the law because he became convinced that it and all connected with it were "mere denizens of the kingdom of dulness," Carlyle was by a sort of compulsion driven towards literature. That alone promised what was indispensable to him,—freedom and an opening to the ideal. But the literature which would serve Thomas Carlyle must be a literature of thought and of spiritual truth, not of mere form. He had already absorbed what the literature of England in the eighteenth century could give him. He had found it to be essentially destructive, and the influence of Gibbon had merely deepened the doubts which beset him. Neither could he find help from France. Her negative attitude of mind, the scepticism of the Encyclopædists, the *persiflage* of Voltaire, were objects of life-long dislike to him. There was much in the recent literature of England which might have served him better; but while, as the essays on Voltaire and on Diderot prove, Carlyle could be wonderfully just to characters most diverse from his own, a necessary condition was that they must be sufficiently removed from him in time or space or both. The calm wisdom of Wordsworth and the manly sense of Scott were to him of no avail, because these men stood too near him.

Carlyle was adrift. Some one told him that German literature would give him what he wanted, and he turned to it. This was in 1819, a time of deep despondency, two years before that "Spiritual New-birth, or Baphometic Fire-baptism," which took place in the *Rue Saint-Thomas de l'Enfer*, known on earth as Leith Walk. In spite of what had been already done, those who knew German were still few, and German books were still scarce.

It was through the kindness of a Kirkcaldy friend that Carlyle procured his from Hamburg. Here at last he found what he had been seeking.

When Carlyle began his literary career Coleridge was in undisputed possession of the German field; and when the former moved to London, with *Sartor Resartus* in his pocket, the latter was still living and still uttering his famous monologues. The pungent criticism of Coleridge in the *Life of Sterling* shows how English transcendentalism, as it was embodied in the person of its greatest prophet of the passing generation, appeared to the keenest eyes of that which was just rising. Severe as it is, the criticism is essentially true, and it is especially important as coming from the pen of him who was to be—and who was when the passage was written—the successor to Coleridge in the leadership of the German party. Carlyle in England and Emerson in America were destined to infuse into English literature in the generation following the death of Coleridge the spirit of transcendentalism. They differed widely from one another, but they differed still more widely from the father of English transcendentalism; and in the difference lies one of the chief points of contrast between the early and the intermediate periods of the nineteenth century.

It is easy to discover what Carlyle considered to be the weakness of Coleridge's transcendentalism. "He [Coleridge] says once, he 'had skirted the howling deserts of Infidelity'; this was evident enough: but he had not had the courage, in defiance of pain and terror, to press resolutely across said deserts to the new firm lands of Faith beyond; he preferred to create logical fatamorganas for himself on this hither side, and laboriously solace himself with these."..."What the light of your mind, which is the direct inspiration of the Almighty, pronounces incredible,—that, in God's name, leave uncredited; at your peril do not try believing that. No subtlest hocus-pocus of 'reason' *versus* 'understanding' will avail for that feat;—and it is terribly perilous to try it in these provinces[1]."

[1] *Life of Sterling*, viii.

Nearly always there is in Carlyle an opposition, either covert or explicit, to the philosophy of the eighteenth century—what he calls scornfully the cause-and-effect philosophy,—and it is in terms of opposition to that, not to Coleridge, that he indicates what in his opinion is important in German philosophy. English philosophy, if there was such a thing—for Carlyle in his essay on the *State of German Literature* (1827) denied its existence—was still dominated by the principles of the eighteenth century; and Carlyle in that essay explains with singular lucidity wherein precisely the philosophy of Germany was different:—"The Kantist, in direct contradiction to Locke and all his followers, both of the French and English or Scotch school, commences from within, and proceeds outwards; instead of commencing from without and, with various precautions and hesitations, endeavouring to proceed inwards. The ultimate aim of all Philosophy must be to interpret appearances, from the given symbol to ascertain the thing. Now the first step towards this, the aim of what may be called Primary or Critical Philosophy, must be to find some indubitable principle; to fix ourselves on some unchangeable basis; to discover what the Germans call the *Urwahr*, the Primitive Truth, the necessarily, absolutely and eternally *True*. This necessarily True, this absolute basis of Truth, Locke silently, and Reid and his followers with more tumult, find in a certain modified Experience, and evidence of Sense, in the universal and natural persuasion of all men. Not so the Germans: they deny that there is here any absolute Truth, or that any philosophy whatever can be built on such a basis; nay they go to the length of asserting, that such an appeal even to the universal persuasions of mankind, gather them with what precautions you may, amounts to a total abdication of Philosophy, strictly so called, and renders not only its farther progress, but its very existence, impossible. What, they would say, have the persuasions, or instinctive beliefs, or whatever they are called, of men, to do with the matter? Is it not the object of Philosophy to enlighten, and rectify, and many times directly contradict these very beliefs? Take, for instance, the voice of all generations of men on the subject of Astronomy. Will there, out of any age or climate, be one

dissentient against the *fact* of the Sun's going round the Earth? Can any evidence be clearer; is there any persuasion more universal, any belief more instinctive? And yet the Sun moves no hair's-breadth; but stands in the centre of his Planets, let us vote as we please. So is it likewise with our evidence for an external independent existence of Matter, and, in general, with our whole argument against Hume; whose reasonings, from the premises admitted both by him and us, the Germans affirm to be rigorously consistent and legitimate; and, on these premises, altogether uncontroverted and incontrovertible. British philosophy since the time of Hume, appears to them nothing more than a 'laborious and unsuccessful striving to build dike after dike in front of our Churches and Judgment-halls, and so turn back from them the deluge of Scepticism, with which that extraordinary writer overflowed us, and still threatens to destroy whatever we value most.'"

There was never penned a more admirable popular exposition of the difference between the two systems; and the difference is of vital importance in practice; for the old philosophy gives us the French Revolution:—"French Philosophism has arisen; in which little word how much do we include! Here, indeed, lies properly the cardinal symptom of the whole widespread malady. Faith is gone out; Scepticism is come in. Evil abounds and accumulates; no man has Faith to withstand it, to amend it, to begin by amending himself; it must go on ever accumulating. While hollow languor and vacuity is the lot of the Upper, and want and stagnation of the Lower, and universal misery is very certain, what other thing is certain? That a Lie cannot be believed! Philosophism knows only this: her other belief is mainly, that in spiritual supersensual matters no Belief is possible. Unhappy! Nay, as yet the Contradiction of a Lie is some kind of Belief; but the Lie with its Contradiction once swept away, what will remain? The five unsatiated Senses will remain, the sixth insatiable Sense (of vanity); the whole *dæmonic* nature of man will remain,—hurled forth to rage blindly without rule or rein; savage itself, yet with all the tools and weapons of civilisation; a spectacle new in History[1]."

[1] *French Revolution*, I. i. 2. 13.

The children have asked for bread and received a stone. The function of idealism is to replace the doubt that kills by the faith which makes alive. All this, Carlyle held, could be done by religion, and by that alone; and he valued German idealism because he found in it the basis of a religion still possible to men of the nineteenth century. He disdained the shallow view that history repeats itself. Faith must return—but not the old faith. Reason must dominate understanding—but not to bring back what understanding had conclusively disproved. Just here lay the difference between his transcendentalism and the transcendentalism of Coleridge. In spite of Carlyle's sarcasm, the distinction between *Verstand* and *Vernunft* is as vital to him as it is to Coleridge: Carlyle's denunciations of the eighteenth century philosophy rest upon the ground that it is a philosophy of the understanding only. But while Coleridge uses the distinction to bring back by an intellectual jugglery an impossible past, Carlyle uses it to build up a new world out of the ruins of the old.

But though the substance of Carlyle's thought is always philosophical, he seldom chooses to express himself in the technical language of philosophy. On the contrary, he frequently reveals his distrust of it. "In the perfect state, all Thought were but the picture and inspiring symbol of Action; Philosophy, except as Poetry and Religion, would have no being."..."It is a chronic malady that of Metaphysics."..."A region of Doubt hovers for ever in the background; in Action alone can we have certainty. Nay properly Doubt is the indispensable inexhaustible Material whereon Action works, which Action has to fashion into Certainty and Reality; only on a canvas of Darkness, such is man's way of being, could the many-coloured picture of our Life paint itself and shine[1]."

No wonder that the man who thought and felt thus should have found his inspiration rather in a thoughtful poet than in a professional philosopher. Not only is the English conception of German transcendentalism transformed as we pass from the first to the second period of German influence, but a highly significant change occurs at the same time in the character of the influence

[1] *Characteristics.*

exercised by German poetry. Coleridge's *Wallenstein* was a fine tribute to Schiller, but in the earlier period it stood alone. Both Schiller and Goethe were, for the most part, known by cruder productions of their youth. Lockhart believed that Scott himself did not know *Faust* in a complete form till the year 1818. Further, notwithstanding "Goetzism" and "Wertherism," nothing in the earlier period is more noteworthy than the secondary position taken by Goethe; in the later period, nothing is more noteworthy than his predominance. This change likewise was largely due to Carlyle. Scott and Byron had, it is true, proclaimed their allegiance to Goethe; but Crabb Robinson found himself a prophet crying in the wilderness when he proclaimed his admiration of the author of *Faust*. John Stuart Mill retained till his death that preference for Schiller which he had found common in his youth. William Taylor preferred Wieland to Goethe. From the vantage-ground of a comprehensive ignorance Jeffrey, impartially disparaging all Germans, but with more particular reference to Goethe, told Carlyle that there were nobler tasks for a man like him "than to vamp up the vulgar dreams of these Dousterswivels you are so anxious to cram down our throats," and predicts that "England never will admire, nor indeed endure," his German divinities[1]. Above all, Coleridge was a Schillerite. He condemned some scenes of *Faust* as "mere magic-lantern pictures," and pronounced the whole play a canting story of seduction. It is Schiller, not Goethe, whom he couples with Shakespeare—and Wordsworth—as revealing the profoundest secrets of the human heart. De Quincey, speaking of Schiller, remarks that "in the land of his birth, by those who undervalue him most, he is ranked as the second name in German literature; everywhere else, he is ranked as the first." "For us," he adds, "who are aliens to Germany, Schiller is the representative of the German intellect in its highest form; and to him, at all events, whether first or second, it is certainly due, that German intellect has become a known power, and a power of growing magnitude, for the great commonwealth of Christendom[2]." On the other hand, he asks us to believe that Goethe's strongest

[1] Froude's *Carlyle*, ii. 39.
[2] Essay on Schiller.

claim to our notice is "extravagant partisanship put forward on his behalf for the last forty years"; and that one of the causes which explain the disproportionate interest attaching to him is "the quantity of enigmatical and unintelligible writing which he has designedly thrown into his later works, by way of keeping up a system of discussion and strife upon his own meaning amongst the critics of his country[1]."

Carlyle himself, in the preface to his translation of *Wilhelm Meister*, declares that to the English Goethe's name "is sound and nothing more: it excites no definite idea in almost any mind"; and lecturing on the *Hero as Man of Letters* he said that he would have chosen Goethe as his hero had he not been hopeless of giving any impression but a false one about him. So late as 1840, then, notwithstanding all he and others had done, Carlyle considered the work to be still very incomplete and the gulf between England and Germany very imperfectly bridged. No wonder that twenty years earlier he himself, then starting his study of German, was content to follow the received opinion and make Schiller the first object of his attention. His offer to translate the whole of Schiller's works was declined by the booksellers, but he wrote that charming *Life of Schiller* (1823–1824) which Goethe procured to be translated into German and pronounced to show an insight surprising in a native of another country. But Schiller was not great enough to hold Carlyle long. He could not be "physician of the iron age" of Europe. He was neither in sufficiently close contact with the real nor sufficiently daring in handling the ideal. What did permanently hold Carlyle was the shadowy mysticism of Novalis, the round and perfect naturalness of Goethe, and the bold humour of Richter, his "intellect vehement, rugged, irresistible," his "imagination vague, sombre, splendid, or appalling[2]." His later works are besprinkled with quotations from, references to, reminiscences of these men, not of Schiller. But the greatest of these is Goethe, and it was to him more than to any one else that Carlyle owed his intellectual salvation. Already in 1823 Goethe is to him "the only living model of a great

[1] Essay on Goethe.
[2] Essay on Richter.

writer[1]." Goethe, he wrote to his brother in 1832, "was my evangelist. His works, if you study them with due earnestness, are the day-spring visiting us in the dark night[2]."

Goethe was more profoundly natural than Schiller[3], and this was one reason why Carlyle continued to dig from the mines of the former long after he had exhausted all that was valuable to him in the latter. But the reason above all others was that he found Goethe profoundly philosophical, while Schiller was essentially an artist,—and even as artist was second to Goethe. Now what Carlyle above all things sought for was something to believe about the universe, some ground of truth to rest upon. "In my heterodox heart," he writes in 1833, "there is yearly growing up the strangest, crabbed, one-sided persuasion, that *art* is but a reminiscence now: that for us in these days prophecy (well understood), not poetry, is the thing wanted. How can we *sing* and *paint* when we cannot yet *believe* and *see*"? Not to learn how to sing and paint, but to learn how to believe and see, Carlyle had studied German. That was the "what you want" which his friend had told him he would find there. He found it amply in Goethe, but only in a minor degree in Schiller; and his countrymen under his guidance transferred their allegiance from the smaller to the greater man, with consequences not unimportant.

Carlyle's work on Goethe followed with scarcely any interval upon that which he devoted to Schiller. He translated *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1824). The book took a deeper hold of him as he worked at it; and when, three years later, the translations entitled *German Romance* appeared, there was included among them the less interesting second part, *Wilhelm Meister's Travels*. Besides these translations, a number of articles on Goethe in various magazines, ranging in date from 1828 to 1832, helped to fix attention upon the great German.

It would be difficult to conceive two men outwardly more unlike than the master and the disciple: the son of the Scottish

[1] *Early Letters*, ii. 191. [2] Froude's *Carlyle*, ii. 260.

[3] Readers of Eckermann's *Conversations*, or of Lewes's *Life of Goethe*, will call to mind the story of the rotten apples.

peasant in contrast with the brilliant ornament of the court of Weimar; the seamed and haggard sage of Chelsea on the one hand, on the other a pattern of manly grace, in youth a radiant Apollo. And in many respects the difference was spiritual also. Carlyle cared comparatively little for the artist in Goethe. What interested him supremely, what he valued as a gospel, was Goethe's answer to the "obstinate questionings" which necessarily arise in the thoughtful mind. Behind Carlyle lay the negations of the eighteenth century, so hateful to him. He could neither rest in them, nor go on, like most of his contemporaries, passively accepting beliefs which the "understanding" had rejected as incredible. In Goethe he found an escape from the negations. Goethe had no prejudices, held nothing sacred from investigation, wore no "Hebrew old-clothes." Yet he stood as far as possible from the materialism of the eighteenth century and from the machine theory of the universe which Carlyle saw in possession in the nineteenth.

To Carlyle, the supreme interest of Goethe lay in his religion. The "Calvinist without the Christianity" held that "a man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him." Religion is "the thing a man does practically believe;...the thing a man does practically lay to heart and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious Universe, and his duties and destiny there[1]." It "consists not in the many things he is in doubt of and tries to believe, but in the few he is assured of, and has no need of effort for believing[2]." It is something which lies over the religious man "like an all-embracing heavenly canopy, like an atmosphere and life-element, which is not spoken of, which in all things is presupposed without speech[3]." Of it he asks, "Is not serene and complete Religion the highest aspect of human nature; as serene Cant, or complete No-religion, is the lowest and miserablest? Between which two all manner of earnest Methodisms, introspections, agonising inquiries, never so morbid, shall play their part, not without approbation[4]."

[1] *Heroes and Hero-Worship.*
[2] *Latter-Day Pamphlets.*
[3] *Past and Present.* [4] *Ibid.*

Carlyle saw around him, and he had himself gone through, the earnest Methodisms, introspections, agonising inquiries. When he first turned to Germany and found his gospel in Goethe he had not yet seen the "spectral Puseyisms" which roused his scorn in later days. But the antidote to both, and to the deification of machinery, lay in Goethe. It lay in Goethe, because he alone among the moderns had resolutely faced the problems of the universe, and solved them. A man of the eighteenth century, he was never under the dominion of its negations and unbeliefs. The three typical heroic men of letters of that century, Johnson, Rousseau and Burns, were men who "fought bravely, and fell." Goethe fought and conquered. He had sounded all the depths of human experience. The Confessions of a Beautiful Soul are felt by the pietist to be a perfect picture, because Goethe had experienced those feelings himself. And yet the most thoroughgoing rationalist could not be more unsparing than he in criticism of worn-out dogmas. The issue of all was a religion profound and true, a religion of things "known for certain," yet absolutely divorced from all creeds, independent of all churches; certain just because it was personal. "God," said Goethe in the last year of his life, "did not retire to rest after the well-known six days of creation, but, on the contrary, is constantly active as on the first. It would have been for Him a poor occupation to compose this heavy world out of simple elements, and to keep it rolling in the sunbeams from year to year, if He had not had the plan of founding a nursery for a world of spirits upon this material basis. So He is now constantly active in higher natures to attract the lower ones[1]."

This was the religion essential to Carlyle, here lay the secret of his spiritual salvation, this was the Germanism he introduced into English literature. How different from the Germanism of the previous generation, with its spectres and goblins, its enchantments and *diablerie*! It will be found that all that Carlyle borrowed from other Germans, from Richter and from Novalis and from Kant and from Fichte, is in substance the same as this.

[1] Eckermann, translated by Oxenford.

It finds the best expression in his favourite quotation, the song of the Earth Spirit in *Faust*,

> "'Tis thus at the roaring loom of Time I ply,
> And weave for God the garment thou see'st him by."

Far from bottling-up the Creator in a Leyden jar, we find that He can no longer be confined within the covers of a book or the communion of a Church. There is a promise that religion may prove to be no longer a thing which has seen its best days, a thing whose function is to give respectability to the decorous idleness of Sunday, but the vital part of the business of life, a real atmosphere, a heavenly canopy. It was this enlarged idea of religion, a religion not of the first century, or of the sixteenth, but of the nineteenth, that Carlyle absorbed into himself. To transmit this from Germany to England, to convince the English mind that there is an alternative to the garb of Hebrew old-clothes on the one hand, and the nakedness of atheism on the other, was the main part of his function in literature. It was thus that he interpreted the mind of Germany. This is the thing which makes the dominance of Germany so significant in the Victorian period.

The ten or twelve years after 1820 were Carlyle's formative period, and the change brought about, in thought and still more in style, is extraordinary. *Sartor Resartus* was finished in 1831; in the same year *Characteristics* appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*; and in these we have the mature Carlyle, the most potent personality in English literature for the next half-century. It is an unconventional personality. To an unsympathetic Frenchman, Taine, Carlyle is "a strange animal, a relic of a lost family, a sort of mastodon, who has strayed in a world not made for him." Even to a countryman, James Smetham, he is a "great Gothic whale lumbering and floundering in the Northern Seas, and spouting his 'foam fountains' under the crackling Aurora and the piercing Hyperborean stars[1]." And yet in the early part of this formative period we find the *Life of Schiller* a very model of simple, limpid English.

It would be a profound mistake to refer that style, which has

[1] Smetham's *Letters*, 213.

been such a cause of offence to numberless readers, exclusively or even principally, to Carlyle's Germanism. Assuredly he did not learn it from Goethe; probably he took something of it from Richter; more still perhaps from *Reinecke Fuchs*. He declared that hardly any book in the world had sunk so deep into him as that; and he added that perhaps his whole speculations about clothes arose out of it[1]. But in its essence Carlyle's style is the outcome of his own wrestlings with life and its mystery. Paradoxical as it seems to say so, no English style is more natural. Addisonian English could never have expressed Carlyle's meaning; however excellent it may have been for Addison, to Carlyle it would always have remained a false style. Carlyle conquered his spiritual kingdom with difficulty, and his words bear the marks of his strivings, as his face through life, in its seams and wrinkles, bore them too.

The truth is, the style of the *Life of Schiller* is an imitated style, that of *Sartor Resartus* is natural, and has its roots in a more distant but a more intimate past. Carlyle told Froude that it originated in the old farmhouse in Annandale. "The humour of it came from his mother. The form was his father's common mode of speech, and had been adopted by himself for its brevity and emphasis[2]." How true this is we shall better understand if we turn to Carlyle's own description of his father's style, in that beautiful section of the *Reminiscences* which is devoted to James Carlyle:—"None of us will ever forget that bold glowing style of his, flowing free from his untutored soul, full of metaphors (though he knew not what a metaphor was), with all manner of potent words which he appropriated and applied with a surprising accuracy you often would not guess whence—brief, energetic, and which I should say conveyed the most definite picture, definite, clear, not in ambitious colours but in full white sunlight, of all the dialects I have ever listened to. Nothing did I ever hear him undertake to render visible which did not become almost ocularly so.... Emphatic I have heard him beyond all men. In anger he had no need of oaths, his words were like sharp arrows that smote

[1] *Journal*, quoted by Froude, ii. 372.
[2] Froude's *Carlyle*, iii. 40.

into the very heart. The fault was that he exaggerated (which fault I also inherit), yet only in description and for the sake chiefly of humorous effect[1]." Except for one point, nearly every word of this might have been written about James Carlyle's great son. The style of Thomas Carlyle cannot be compared to "pure bright sunshine": the colour with which it is full charged is frequently lurid. He accurately indicated its character in declaring his intention, with respect to the French Revolution, to splash down what he knew "in large masses of colour, that it may look like a smoke-and-flame conflagration in the distance[2]." But all the other points—the boldness and glow, the metaphors, the potency and piercing sharpness of the words, the emphasis, the marvellous pictorial power, the exaggeration—are features of the style of Thomas Carlyle.

This consideration, that the style in which Carlyle wrote was really the vesture in which, to him, thought naturally clothed itself, ought to be decisive of the frequently but fruitlessly debated question whether Carlyle ought to have written in such a style or not. Most of his contemporaries, and many in later days, have arraigned him at the bar of criticism on the score of this style; and the *gravamen* of the charge, implicit if not explicit, usually is that the style is unnatural, contorted, fantastic. Jeffrey remonstrated with him, evidently under the belief that the thought expressed and the manner of expression were alike the outcome of perversity and wrong-headedness. Edmond Scherer, under the same impression, spoke of Carlyle as "demeaning himself like a mystagogue." Taine called his style "demoniacal."

After his marriage in 1826 Carlyle lived for a short time at Comely Bank, near Edinburgh; but in 1828 he removed to the now famous moorland farmhouse of Craigenputtock, where he remained until the removal in 1834 to Cheyne Row. There is no period in all his life more important or more really fruitful than the six years spent at Craigenputtock. It would be tiresome to enter again into the controversy as to whether he was or was not unkind to his wife in taking her there; but it may be safely

[1] *Reminiscences*, i. 8.

[2] Quoted in Nichol's *Carlyle*, 71.

said that whatever justification can come from doing what was best for his own genius, was his. The actual literary output of the period is considerable; its influence on Carlyle's subsequent career was incalculable. The best of the essays were written there. Besides the *Characteristics*, already mentioned, there were written at Craigenputtock, among others, *Burns*, *Voltaire*, *Diderot*, *Johnson*, *Novalis*, the second essay on Richter, *The Diamond Necklace* and *Signs of the Time*.

To the Craigenputtock period and the years immediately preceding it belongs, then, much the greater part of Carlyle's work in criticism, and it will be well to pause and consider its significance. This has been occasionally exaggerated, but far more frequently underrated. There is some exaggeration when we are told that Carlyle marks "the beginning of a new era in the history of British criticism[1]." Undoubtedly he does, as contrasted with Jeffrey and Gifford and the Blackwood group. The professional reviewing of the day was done in a style altogether foreign to Carlyle, a style which he did more, perhaps, than anyone else to render impossible. But Lamb and Coleridge and Shelley and Landor had written before Carlyle, or were writing contemporaneously with him; and though they are all unlike him, still the germs of the revolution in criticism lay in them. The essence of the new criticism is sympathy, that of the old is rule. The eighteenth century critics, and those of the early nineteenth century who followed in their steps, wrote under the conviction that there were certain canons in literature, valid at all times and under all circumstances, by which the writer could be tried, and under which he ought to be condemned if he were found guilty of infringement. Hence criticism was apt to consist either of mere laudation or of mere censure; or if the two were mingled they were equally dogmatic. Wordsworth was simply condemned; Shakespeare, having passed through the fires of censure, was merely lauded. "Nine-tenths of our critics," says Carlyle, "have told us little more of Shakspeare than what honest Franz Horn says our neighbours used to tell of him, 'that he was a great spirit, and stept majestically along[2].'"

[1] Nichol's *Carlyle*, 168. [2] *Miscellanies*, i. 221.

To Carlyle, criticism must be neither pure panegyric nor bare censure. Goethe must do something more than "step majestically along"; Voltaire must at least be understood. The first and chief thing needful is comprehension, sympathy; only on that basis is wise praise or wise censure possible. "No man can pronounce dogmatically, with even a chance of being right, on the faults of a poem, till he has seen its very best and highest beauty;...the beauty of the poem as a whole in the strict sense; the clear view of it as an indivisible Unity[1]." And this could only be done by viewing it from the author's own standpoint.

In all the works of Carlyle there is no idea so deep-rooted or so multifariously expressed as that of the supreme importance of biography. This is the essence of his *Hero-Worship*. It is reaffirmed with hardly less emphasis in *Past and Present* and in *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. "There is no Biography of a man," he says, "much less any History, or Biography of a Nation, but wraps in it a message out of Heaven[2]." It is the core of his conception of history. "History," he quotes, "is the essence of innumerable biographies[3]." In *Heroes and Hero-Worship* he declares that the history of the world is the biography of great men. In *Sartor Resartus* we are told that "Biography is by nature the most universally profitable, universally pleasant of all things: especially Biography of distinguished individuals[4]"; and again, "Great Men are the inspired (speaking and acting) Texts of that divine Book of Revelations, whereof a chapter is completed from epoch to epoch, and by some named History[5]." And he not only preached this doctrine, but he practised it as well. His *Cromwell* and his *Frederick* are both practical illustrations of the doctrine of hero-worship. *The French Revolution* itself is made, not always without some suspicion of violence, to revolve round persons, above all the person of Mirabeau.

Carlyle's literary criticism comes under the same all-embracing conception: it too is essentially biographic. "There is no heroic poem in the world but is at bottom a biography, the life of a

[1] *Miscellanies*, i. 219–220.
[2] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 277.
[3] *Miscellanies*, iv. 53.
[4] *Sartor Resartus*, 51.
[5] *ibid.* 122.

man[1]"; and conversely, "there is no life of a man, faithfully recorded, but is a heroic poem of its sort, rhymed or unrhymed[2]." The biographic element may be purely spiritual, as in Carlyle's own "spiritual autobiography," *Sartor Resartus*, but in all cases we shall find that it is not only present but is essential. He conceives himself to be successful when he has got to the man's own inner meaning, as it appeared to himself. Till that is done nothing is accomplished; and that can only be done through the power of sympathy. "No character, we may affirm, was ever rightly understood till it had first been regarded with a certain feeling, not of tolerance only, but of sympathy. For here, more than in any other case, it is verified that the heart sees farther than the head. Let us be sure, our enemy is *not* that hateful being we are too apt to paint him. His vices and basenesses lie combined in far other order before his mind than before ours; and under colours which palliate them, nay perhaps exhibit them as virtues. Were he the wretch of our imagining, his life would be a burden to himself; for it is not by bread alone that the basest mortal lives; a certain approval of conscience is equally essential even to physical existence; is the fine all-pervading cement by which that wondrous union, a Self, is held together[3]."

The first qualification of the critic, then, must be sympathy, the determination and the capacity to understand the thing criticised, in the light of its creator's purpose. Carlyle was warned of the importance of this because he saw so much of what he himself admired, of what had nourished his own spirit, condemned from sheer lack of comprehension. The favourite adjective depreciatory of German literature, was the adjective mystical; and "mystical," writes Carlyle in the essay on the *State of German Literature*, "in most cases, will turn out to be merely synonymous with *not understood*."

A second qualification, equally necessary, is reverence; and that implies a radical change in, almost a reversal of, the attitude habitually assumed by the critic towards the thing criticised. The reviewer was in the habit of pronouncing his judgments *ex*

[1] Essay on Scott. [2] *ibid.*
[3] Essay on Voltaire.

cathedra: he was the judge, and the author came before him for sentence. In Carlyle's view, the critic, *qua* critic at least, is the inferior. His function is only to understand, that of the author is to create. "Criticism stands like an interpreter between the inspired and the uninspired; between the prophet and those who hear the melody of his words, and catch some glimpse of their material meaning, but understand not their deep import[1]."

Sympathy is good, reverence is good; but neither one nor the other, nor even both together, are sufficient. The fact remains that the critic *has* the function of judge. Sympathy is good in so far as it leads to comprehension, not if it produces confusion between right and wrong, wise and foolish. Reverence must be directed to that which is worthy of respect. The greatest of men are faulty and their works imperfect, and it is part, though a subordinate part, of the critic's duty to point out the imperfections. In order to do so correctly he must act on some principle. "To determine with any infallibility whether what we call a fault *is* in very deed a fault, we must previously have settled two points, neither of which may be so readily settled. First, we must have made plain to ourselves what the poet's aim really and truly was, how the task he had to do stood before his own eye, and how far, with such means as it afforded him, he has fulfilled it. Secondly, we must have decided whether and how far this aim, this task of his, accorded,—not with *us*, and our individual crotchets, and the crotchets of our little senate where we give or take the law,—but with human nature, and the nature of things at large; with the universal principles of poetic beauty, not as they stand written in our text-books, but in the hearts and imaginations of all men[2]."

It was in this spirit and under the guidance of this principle, that Carlyle approached the task of criticism. He was successful in it exactly in proportion to his fidelity in following the laws he had himself laid down. On the whole he showed himself surprisingly catholic. His principal limitation was with reference to his own countrymen and contemporaries, whom he rarely judged generously or even justly. What he has said or written in letters or reminiscences about Lamb and Coleridge is well known. Of

[1] *State of German Literature.* [2] *Goethe, Miscellanies*, i. 219.

the formal essays published in his lifetime the least satisfactory is that on Scott, whose success he seemed to find it hard to pardon. He could not indeed blind himself to Scott's deep manliness, but he almost completely ignored his genius. A few cheap sneers at the restaurateur of Europe are a poor acknowledgment for a gallery of portraits unmatched for fulness and variety, and on the whole for quality, since Shakespeare.

Scott's great fault, in Carlyle's view, was the want of sufficient seriousness. It is the lack of sympathy resulting from this idea which makes Carlyle's criticism of his great countrymen so inadequate: Carlyle for once has been false to his own principle, and the result is to demonstrate the truth and the importance of the principle. Had he been always as easily repelled, Carlyle would assuredly not have deserved the praise of catholicity; but if his subject were only removed sufficiently from himself, he could treat not only tolerantly but with generosity talents and aims the most widely opposed to his own. None of his essays is more creditable to him, though some are profounder, than those on the Frenchmen, Voltaire and Diderot. Voltaire was nearly everything that Carlyle most detested; he had hardly any of the gifts which won his critic's spontaneous admiration. He speaks with truth of Voltaire's "inborn levity of nature, his entire want of Earnestness." He "was by birth a mocker, and light *Pococurante*[1]." "He is no great man, but only a great *Persifleur*; a man for whom life, and all that pertains to it, has, at best, but a despicable meaning; who meets its difficulties not with earnest force, but with gay agility; and is found always at the top, less by power in swimming, than by lightness in floating[2]." Voltaire's results are mainly negative; and Carlyle loathed mere negation. In all points this man is as wide as the poles removed from Carlyle and from all that Carlyle instinctively admires. But he is French, and he belongs to a slightly earlier time; and instead of railing, Carlyle resolutely sets himself to understand him. He finds that great part of what he dislikes in Voltaire is not really the fault of Voltaire, but is the outcome of his surroundings. He cannot place Voltaire on such a pedestal as that on

[1] *Voltaire.* [2] *ibid.*

which he elevates Goethe; but he can and he does do justice to the much that is admirable in Voltaire's intellect, and gives generous recognition to his lucidity, his method and the wide sweep of his knowledge. "From Newton's *Principia* to the *Shaster* and *Vedam*, nothing has escaped him: he has glanced into all literatures and all sciences; nay studied in them, for he can speak a rational word on all. It is known, for instance, that he understood Newton when no other man in France understood him: indeed his countrymen may call Voltaire the discoverer of intellectual England;—a discovery, it is true, rather of the Curtis than of the Columbus sort, yet one which in his day still remained to be made. Nay, from all sides he brings new light into his country: now, for the first time, to the upturned wondering eyes of Frenchmen in general, does it become clear that Thought has actually a kind of existence in other kingdoms; that some glimmerings of civilisation had dawned here and there on the human species, prior to the Siècle de Louis Quatorze[1]."

Three conspicuous features mark the criticism of Carlyle: its profound humanity, its penetration, and its reach.

Its humanity springs from his conviction of the essentially biographic character of all books worth calling books. To him, as to Hegel, "ideas are living things, and have hands and feet." Everything in existence is the embodiment of thought; and "of all the things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful and worthy are the things we call Books," because a book "is the *purest* embodiment the thought of man can have[2]." One of the numerous points of contact between Carlyle and Browning is the conviction, held by both, that nothing is much worth study but the development of soul. This conviction deeply influences Carlyle's criticism. The man and his work are always viewed in relation; the one throws a light on the other; and hence the book is no less vital than the writer. It is by this method that Carlyle is enabled to bridge the gulf between himself and writers like Voltaire and Diderot. It is thus that he fathoms the meaning of Goethe. It is in this spirit that he achieves such

[1] *Voltaire.* [2] *Hero as Man of Letters.*

a triumph of criticism as the essay on Burns. Carlyle had drunk in with his mother's milk the knowledge necessary for the triumph in the last case. Scotch himself, and sprung from the class to which Burns belonged, he knew the poet's meaning by instinct, without needing to reason it out. Every word that Burns wrote was to him a revelation of the spirit of the man. His essay has rather the value of a piece of creative literature than of a mere criticism.

The second point, the penetrative character of Carlyle's criticism, is closely connected with the first. He is absolutely indifferent to superficial and subordinate matters. Until he has reached the heart, he conceives himself to have achieved nothing; and usually he gains his end through groanings and travail. Dr Garnett has admirably pointed out how, "another Jacob, he wrestled with Goethe, and would not let him go till he had won his blessing"; and how in the translation of *Wilhelm Meister* he gradually advanced from the view that "Goethe is the greatest genius that has lived for a century, and the greatest ass that has lived for three," to the avowal that the principal demerit of his *Wilhelm Meister* is "the disfigurement of a translation." It is by a similar process that all Carlyle's successes are won. Occasionally, as in the case of Burns and partly of Richter and Johnson, by natural sympathy; sometimes, as in the case of the French writers, by a violent intellectual effort; sometimes again, as with Goethe, by a mixed process, Carlyle wins the actual standpoint of his author, or what he believes to be such, and interprets his works from thence.

The last point in connexion with Carlyle's criticism is its reach. He is scarcely ever purely critical; there is almost always something creative in his essays. The writers he values are those who give him an outlook over history and an insight into human nature; and he values them in proportion as they do that. Mere elegance of form and phrase he cares little for; rather, he has no patience with it; but genuineness, whether in a Corn-Law Rhymer or in a Goethe, he deems of incalculable worth. Both are emphatically men. "Here is an earnest truth-speaking man; no theoriser, sentimentaliser, but a practical man of work

and endeavour, man of sufferance and endurance[1]." Goethe is "the Strong One of his time." And both, with the many intermediate between them in gifts and importance, are valued for the insight they give into their own country or the world. The history of Goethe's mind "is, in fact, at the same time, the history of German culture in his day[2]"; and the *Corn-Law Rhymes* are rich in suggestions for the author of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. Behind literature there always lies to Carlyle something greater than literature. He cites the correspondence between Frederick and Voltaire, and then adds his comment:—"We can perceive what kind of Voltaire it was to whom the Crown-Prince now addressed himself; and how luminous an object, shining afar out of the solitudes of Champagne upon the ardent young man, still so capable of admiration. Model Epic, *Henriade;* model history, *Charles Douze;* sublime tragedies, *César*, *Alzire* and others, which readers still know though with less enthusiasm, are blooming forth in Friedrich's memory and heart: such Literature as man never saw before; and in the background Friedrich has inarticulately a feeling as if, in this man, there were something grander than all Literatures: a Reform of human Thought itself; a new 'Gospel,' good-tidings or God's Message, by this man;—which Friedrich does not suspect, as the world with horror does, to be a *Ba'spel*, or Devil's-Message of bad-tidings[3]!"

This feeling, inarticulate in Frederick, is articulate in Carlyle. He quotes with approval the saying of Novalis that "the highest problem of literature is the Writing of a Bible[4]"; and that of Fichte, that the "Literary Man" is the "Priest" of these Modern Epochs[5]. To Carlyle therefore there is nothing of dilettantism in literature that is worthy of the name. Its function is to reveal the Divine Idea of the World; and it is valuable just in proportion as it performs that function. A typical example of Carlyle's mode of criticism is the contrast he draws between Johnson and Hume. Brushing aside all subordinate matters he goes straight to the heart of each; and he views both in relation to the life of Europe in their time:—

[1] *Corn-Law Rhymes.* [2] *Miscellanies*, i. 176.
[3] *Friedrich*, iii. 225. [4] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 240. [5] *ibid.* 270.

"It is worthy of note that, in our little British Isle, the two grand Antagonisms of Europe should have stood embodied, under their very highest concentration, in two men produced simultaneously among ourselves." Samuel Johnson and David Hume were children nearly of the same year; through life they were spectators of the same Life-movement; often inhabitants of the same city. Greater contrast, in all things, between two great men, could not be. Hume, well-born, competently provided for, whole in body and mind, of his own determination forces a way into Literature: Johnson, poor, moonstruck, diseased, forlorn, is forced into it 'with the bayonet of necessity at his back.' And what a part did they severally play there! As Johnson became the father of all succeeding Tories; so was Hume the father of all succeeding Whigs, for his own Jacobitism was but an accident, as worthy to be named Prejudice as any of Johnson's. Again, if Johnson's culture was exclusively English; Hume's, in Scotland, became European;—for which reason too we find his influence spread deeply over all quarters of Europe, traceable deeply in all speculation, French, German, as well as domestic; while Johnson's name, out of England, is hardly anywhere to be met with. In spiritual stature they are almost equal; both great, among the greatest; yet how unlike in likeness! Hume has the widest, methodising, comprehensive eye; Johnson the keenest for perspicacity and minute detail: so had, perhaps chiefly, their education ordered it. Neither of the two rose into poetry; yet both to some approximation thereof: Hume to something of an Epic clearness and method; as in his delineation of the Commonwealth Wars; Johnson to many a deep Lyric tone of plaintiveness and impetuous graceful power, scattered over his fugitive compositions. Both, rather to the general surprise, had a certain rugged humour shining through their earnestness: the indication, indeed, that they *were* earnest men, and had *subdued* their wild world into a kind of temporary home and safe dwelling. Both were, by principle and habit, Stoics: yet Johnson with the greater merit, for he alone had very much to triumph over; farther, he alone ennobled his Stoicism into Devotion. To Johnson Life was as a Prison, to be endured with heroic faith: to Hume it was little more than a

foolish Bartholomew-Fair Show-booth, with the foolish crowdings and elbowings of which it was not worth while to quarrel; the whole would break up, and be at liberty, so *soon*. Both realised the highest task of Manhood, that of living like men; each did not unfitly, in his way: Hume as one, with factitious, half-false gaiety, taking leave of what was itself wholly but a Lie: Johnson as one, with awe-struck, yet resolute and piously expectant heart, taking leave of a Reality, to enter a Reality still higher. Johnson had the harder problem of it, from first to last: whether, with some hesitation, we can admit that he was intrinsically the better gifted, may remain undecided[1]."

The removal to Cheyne Row in the summer of 1834 was the last great change in Carlyle's life. Henceforth, in locality, as well as in profession, his destiny was fixed; but trials and struggles stern enough were still to be endured. The available capital with which he and his wife faced the change to London amounted only to about £200; and in February, 1835, he records "as a fact and document for the literary history of this time," that "it is now some three-and-twenty months since I have earned one penny by the craft of literature[2]." But writing to his brother John in January, 1834, Carlyle mentions receipt of money from Fraser for *Sartor*. The statement quoted therefore must apparently mean that he had not been paid for anything *written* within twenty-three months. Such, at the age of thirty-nine, was the financial condition of the greatest literary genius of his time.

Twice before Carlyle had paid visits of considerable duration to London; the first in 1824–1825; the second in 1831–1832. On the latter occasion his object had been to arrange for the publication of *Sartor Resartus*. It proved no easy task. *Sartor* was offered to John Murray, among others, and actually accepted by him. But Byron's ἄναξ of publishers had lost some of his youthful daring, and drew back. All the world knows how it ultimately appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1833–1834, and justified, from their own point of view, the publishers who rejected it, by proving to be "beyond measure unpopular." Cash scanty—no prospect of more except through literature—and his

[1] *Miscellanies*, iv. 129–130. [2] Froude's *Carlyle*, iii. 19.

principal work threatening to bring disaster on its publisher—the prospect was gloomy enough. But Carlyle held doggedly on, and had the courage to decline an offer of employment on the *Times*, procured for him by his friend John Sterling.

Before Carlyle moved to London he had determined upon his next subject. He had spent the early months of 1833 in Edinburgh[1], "reading violently" in the Advocates' Library, on John Knox as well as on the French Revolution, until he finally settled down to the latter subject. The possibility of settling in Edinburgh had been in his mind, but when he revisited them he found himself not sufficiently attracted by those with whom it would have been necessary to associate. "As to the men here, they are beautiful to look upon after mere black-faced sheep; yet not persons of whom instruction or special edification in any way is to be expected. From a Highlander you once for all *cannot* get breeches[2]."

It was therefore with a mind full of the Revolution that Carlyle made his migration. A few months later he began writing his history, not without the usual stress. On September 21, 1834, he records that "after two weeks of blotching and bloring" he has produced—"two clean pages[3]!" He had to struggle, not only with the natural difficulties of his subject, but with officialdom and red-tape as well. The British Museum contained the finest collection in the world of pamphlets on the Revolution; but Carlyle failed to get access to it. Nevertheless, early in 1835 the first volume was finished. It was the MS. of this volume which, lent to Mill, who had been generously helpful in finding and lending books, was accidentally destroyed. Carlyle bore the loss nobly—he never failed to meet the great troubles of life with dignity. Setting himself resolutely to re-write it, he finished it just a year after he began the composition of the first version. The last sentence of the third volume was written on January 12, 1837, and Carlyle went out for a walk, saying to his wife, "I know not whether this book is worth anything, nor what the world will do with it, or misdo, or entirely forbear to do, as is

[1] Froude's *Carlyle*, ii. 332. [2] *ibid.*
[3] *ibid.* ii. 456.

likeliest; but this I could tell the world: You have not had for a hundred years any book that comes more direct and flamingly from the heart of a living man. Do what you like with it, you ——[1]." Almost exactly half a century earlier, Edward Gibbon had written the last sentences of the greatest history in the English language; and the record of his emotions forms an instructive contrast: "It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and, perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future date of my History, the life of the historian must be short and precarious." The core of the differences between *The French Revolution* and *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is contained in these two passages. There could be no more convincing proof of the truth of Carlyle's doctrine that what a man writes in his books is *himself*.

The reception of *The French Revolution* was very different from that which had been accorded to *Sartor*. The most prominent men of the time, even those who least agreed with Carlyle, recognised its author as now one of the first of English men of letters. But meanwhile finances were running low; and though the essays on *Mirabeau* and on *The Diamond Necklace* brought in something, it was difficult to bridge the time till the history could be printed and become remunerative; and Carlyle turned his eyes towards America, as his countryman Burns, in distress for widely different reasons, had formerly turned his. Emerson had visited him at Craigenputtock in 1833, and afterwards more than once urged him to migrate across the Atlantic, where, he was

[1] Froude's *Carlyle*, iii. 84.

assured, he could make income sufficient for his needs by lecturing. *Sartor Resartus* had been published there in book form (1836) before England was ready to receive it in that shape. Carlyle would probably have gone; but Harriet Martineau and several others determined to make an effort to keep him in England; and the outcome was a series of six lectures on German literature delivered in 1837. The experiment was completely successful, and the £135 it brought in solved for the Carlyles the problem of the material means of life. A second set followed in 1838, a third in 1839, and the fourth and last in 1840. The subject of the last course was *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. They were the only lectures which were published in full and during Carlyle's life; but the second course, on the History of European Literature, was printed from notes after his death.

Before this last course of lectures was delivered, *Chartism* (1839) had been written and published. It was offered first to the *Quarterly Review*, because the author's notions differed intensely both from those of the speculating Radicals and from those of the Whigs, and he thought he might most hopefully address himself to the better class of Conservatives[1]. Lockhart felt obliged to decline it; but he did so in such a way that the two men, who were very slightly known to one another previously, remained friends ever after. When Mrs Welsh died, Carlyle turned to Lockhart for comfort, and the latter in response sent him his own beautiful lines, which Carlyle frequently repeated in his declining years:—

"It is an old belief
That on some solemn shore
Beyond the sphere of grief
Dear friends shall meet once more—

Beyond the sphere of Time
And Sin and Fate's control,
Serene in changeless prime
Of Body and of Soul.

That creed I fain would keep,
This hope I'll not forego;
Eternal be the Sleep
Unless to waken so."

[1] Lang's *Lockhart*, ii. 227.

Before he wrote *Chartism* Carlyle had already fixed in his mind that his next subject should be Oliver Cromwell; but no book he ever undertook longer refused to be written. The subject was suggested to him by Mill, who asked him to write an article on the great Protector for the *London and Westminster Review*. Carlyle consented; but Mill went abroad, and in his absence his sub-editor, an Aberdonian named Robertson, impertinently wrote to Carlyle that he "meant to do Cromwell himself[1]." Carlyle in anger determined to expand the article into a book. Early in 1839 he was busy gathering authorities; and in the course of his quest he set on foot the movement which resulted in the establishment of the London Library. But as late as October, 1843, not a word had been written. It was not until Carlyle had completely changed his plan that he made any progress. He had designed a life of Cromwell and, practically, a history of the Commonwealth; what he ultimately produced was a sort of glorified and inspired piece of editorial work, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches: with Elucidations* (1845). From the plan, there is necessarily less of Carlyle than in any other of his great works. There is therefore some loss of vividness; for the Lord-General was not such an artist in words as his editor. But it is a wonderful piece of portraiture; and here and there we come upon passages, like the Battle of Dunbar, as vivid and picturesque as any Carlyle ever wrote.

Two years before the appearance of *Cromwell*, Carlyle published that remarkable *πάρεργον*, *Past and Present*,—remarkable not only for its intrinsic merits but as one of the only two books Carlyle ever wrote which he found easy of composition. It was the fruit of seven weeks' work, and it has left, says Froude, not a single cry of complaint in his correspondence. This book, its predecessor, *Chartism*, and its successor, the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, form a trio of works inspired by the social condition of England in Carlyle's own day, and full of that peculiar Radicalism which cut Carlyle off from the party to which the English aristocracy belonged, and yet left him not only the most vigorous advocate of aristocratic or rather autocratic government, but a believer in

[1] Froude's *Carlyle*, iii. 149.

the English aristocracy itself, as at any rate the most capable and the most conscientious class the country possessed.

The year 1851 was marked by the *Life of Sterling*, the purest work of art Carlyle ever produced, and one of the most beautiful biographies in English,—probably the one which best of all satisfies Carlyle's own conception of what a biography ought to be. Like *Past and Present* it was written swiftly and with ease; standing thus in strong contrast to its successor, the last important work of Carlyle, the *History of Friedrich II of Prussia, called Frederick the Great* (1858–1865). Frederick had been in Carlyle's mind as a possible subject soon after the completion of his *Cromwell*; and when *John Sterling* was out of his hands he began reading. It was by far the largest subject Carlyle had ever attempted, and the difficulties were proportionate. "If they were to offer me all Prussia, all the solar system," he said, "I would not write *Frederick* again." About the end of 1851 Carlyle was deep in study. In September, 1852, he was in Germany for the purpose of gathering materials. For five years more he was completely immersed in the subject; and it was not until 1858 that the world saw the fruit of this labour in the first two volumes of *Friedrich*. In the same year he took his second journey to Germany, his principal object being to visit the battle-fields of Frederick. Carlyle was always scrupulously careful in studying topography, and he had an eye for country almost as penetrating as his eye for human physiognomy. No journey of his failed to leave its mark on his books. A visit to Paris in 1825 contributed to the vividness of the *French Revolution*; and without this second visit to Germany the magnificent battle-pieces which enrich *Friedrich* must have missed great part of their effect. He landed at Hamburg on August 24, and he was back again at Chelsea on September 22. The work accomplished in the time was marvellous; and surely no higher compliment was ever paid to a historian than that which is implied in the German belief that, down to the opening of the German archives, and the publication of the correspondence of Frederick in the eighties, Carlyle's work was the best, not only as a general history of Frederick, but as a study of his campaigns.

The remaining years of Carlyle's life crept through gloom towards the grave. The triumph of the rectorship of Edinburgh University was clouded immediately by the tragedy of his wife's death. He was condemned to idleness, for his hand trembled so that he could not write. He tried dictation, but no one who in the least degree understands Carlyle will be surprised that the experiment failed: for him it was impossible. He occasionally showed an interest in public affairs, such as the agitation over General Eyre; and he wrote a few slight things,—the *Early Kings of Norway* and the essay on the portraits of Knox,—but substantially his work was done when he finished *Frederick*; and when he died in 1881 he had already for fifteen years belonged to the past of English literature.

The effective literary life of Carlyle is comprised, then, within the forty-two years between 1823, the date of the series of articles on Schiller's *Life and Works* in the *London Magazine*, and 1865, when *Frederick the Great* was completed. Throughout, under superficial differences, it was singularly of a piece: gradual developments can be traced, but no fundamental change of principle. Carlyle "made himself" at Craigenputtock, and what he became there he remained till the end. As an apostle of Germanism and as a critic he has been already considered: it remains to notice the longer works, and those in which he speaks more directly in his own name. It will be possible to dismiss them with comparative brevity; for, as has just been indicated, under all forms and guises we find the same Carlyle.

The works now in question may be divided into two principal groups,—the histories, and that group of writings in which Carlyle either openly or under the veil of myth spoke to and advised his own generation. The division however does not go as deep as it may seem to go. Carlyle's histories are, like his other works, intensely personal,—and also intensely practical. What he said of his *French Revolution* was true: it came direct and flaming from his heart. And it did so because to him the facts were not dead, but alive for lesson and for warning. He was a John the Baptist, faring hard, girt with rough skins, and from his desert retreat calling upon the world to repent. His whole works are

a sermon on the text that what men sow that shall they reap, whether as individuals or as nations. The French Revolution was to him simply the most impressive illustration of that truth afforded by modern Europe:—

"So many centuries, say only from Hugh Capet downwards, had been adding together, century transmitting it with increase to century, the sum of Wickedness, of Falsehood, Oppression of man by man. Kings were sinners, and Priests were, and People. Open Scoundrels rode triumphant, bediademed, becoronetted, bemitred; or the still fataler species of Secret-Scoundrels, in their fair-sounding formulas, speciosities, respectabilities, hollow within: the race of Quacks was grown many as the sands of the sea. Till at length such a sum of Quackery had accumulated itself as, in brief, the Earth and the Heavens were weary of. Slow seemed the Day of Settlement; coming on, all imperceptible, across the bluster and fanfaronade of Courtierisms, Conquering-Heroisms, Most Christian *Grand-Monarque*-isms, Well-beloved Pompadourisms: yet behold it was always coming; behold it has come, suddenly, unlooked for by any man! The harvest of long centuries was ripening and whitening so rapidly of late; and now it is grown *white*, and is reaped rapidly, as it were, in one day. Reaped, in this Reign of Terror; and carried home, to Hades and the Pit!—Unhappy sons of Adam: it is ever so; and never do they know it, nor will they know it. With cheerfully smoothed countenances, day after day, and generation after generation, they, calling cheerfully to one another, Well-speed-ye, are at work, *sowing the wind*. And yet, as God lives, they *shall reap the whirlwind*: no other thing, we say, is possible,—since God is a Truth, and His World is a Truth[1]."

This is no mere rhapsody; it was a belief firmly held by Carlyle; it was the belief which made all history so intensely alive to him. He is profoundly impressed by the scientific fact that no slightest action fails of its effect; that the casting of a pebble alters the centre of gravity of the world; and that the effect goes on producing other effects for ever. And what was true in the physical was equally, or if possible was more deeply true in

[1] *French Revolution*, III. v. i. 172–173.

the moral sphere; for the spiritual is the real, and the so-called real is only appearance, the vesture of the spiritual. It was largely, if not principally, to preach this doctrine that Carlyle wrote his *French Revolution*; and this purpose goes far to explain the plan of that book, which is rather, as it has been variously called, the "epic" or the "drama" than the "history" of the Revolution. Carlyle's is, historically viewed, an extremely solid piece of work. Much has been discovered since which he did not know; many mistakes into which he fell have been revealed; yet having regard to what was known and what was possible to be known seventy years ago, the book fully deserves the praise of accuracy. It has other and deeper merits; no new discoveries of fact can ever make antiquated the pictures drawn by Carlyle; no future historian can afford to ignore his delineations of the men of the Revolution. But even when it was new, Carlyle's history was not and did not pretend to be a record of the facts. The method is rather that of an apocalypse than that of a narrative. It assumes much knowledge in the reader; if he possesses that knowledge, the book throws a flood of light upon the subject; if he does not, it remains itself in some respects a mystery. For the soul of it, however, the only knowledge which is indispensable is a knowledge of human nature, the only indispensable power is the power to appreciate thought. Nothing but the heart to feel and the mind to think are needed for the appreciation of Mirabeau and Danton and Robespierre, of the taking of the Bastille, the flight to Varennes, the death of Louis XV, the carnage of the Swiss. All those wonderful pictures are so poetical that we can only marvel why the man who painted them could not express himself through the usual vehicle of poetry. But he tried and failed.

If there were no specific declaration of Carlyle's belief in the importance of biography to be found, it would be amply attested by the character of his histories. They are emphatically histories of men, living, acting, failing, triumphing. No "machine theory" of the universe will do for him; on nothing are the phials of his wrath emptied more copiously than on that. In the *Hero as Divinity* he pictures beautifully Igdrasil, the Ash-tree of Existence,

and, with a sigh, contrasts with it "the *Machine* theory of the Universe." He has no belief in the doctrine that the time calls forth the great man. "The Time call forth? Alas, we have known Times *call* loudly enough for their great man; but not find him when they called! He was not there; Providence had not sent him; the Time, *calling* its loudest, had to go down to confusion and wreck because he would not come when called[1]." Hence history is nothing to Carlyle until he has found his great man; and when he has found him he has to realise him as a man, clothed in flesh and blood. His outward appearance even was important as an index of inward character. Carlyle was skilled in physiognomy, and relied much upon it. "Aut Knox aut Diabolus," he said of what he believed to be the genuine portrait of the Reformer; "if not Knox who can it be? A man with that face left his mark behind him[2]." And in 1854 he wrote with reference to a project of a National Exhibition of Scottish Portraits: "In all my poor Historical investigations it has been, and always is, one of the most primary wants to procure a bodily likeness of the personage inquired after; a good *Portrait* if such exists; failing that, even an indifferent if sincere one. In short, *any* representation, made by a faithful human creature, of that Face and Figure, which *he* saw with his eyes, and which I can never see with mine, is now valuable to me, and much better than none at all[3]."

The moving force in history, then, is the Great Man. Carlyle would have scoffed at the idea of a "science" of history; for as yet, at least, there is no science of human character. For parliaments, assemblies and the machinery of government Carlyle had little respect—too little. To him, the struggle between King and Parliament in England summed itself up in the character of Cromwell. He could interest himself in nothing else; and the history of the Commonwealth refused to be written by him. He could not interest himself even in the other human actors, much less in the "machinery": it was more tolerable to him to rescue the speeches of Cromwell from their "agglomerate of opaque

[1] *Hero as Divinity*. [2] Froude's *Carlyle*, iv. 417.
[3] *Miscellanies*, vii. 129.

confusions, printed and reprinted; of darkness on the back of darkness, thick and threefold[1]."

The method of hero-worship has its dangers, as all methods have. Carlyle has not escaped the tendency to idealise the hero. It is probable that Cromwell, in the latter part of his career, is less defensible against the charge of "vaulting ambition" than Carlyle would make him. But it was with reference to Frederick that he had to do most violence to himself. Here too he felt the need of the hero; but neither in respect of the man nor in respect of the period was his choice altogether happy. Few periods of the world's history could be found with which Carlyle was less in sympathy than he was with the eighteenth century; and Frederick was in many ways the incarnation of the eighteenth century. But in two points Frederick satisfied Carlyle's needs; and in other respects the historian squared him as best he could with those requirements. The first and chief point was that Frederick was the man who placed the Prussian monarchy on a firm footing and raised it to the rank of a great Power. Carlyle already foresaw how much that would mean to Europe; and his history was hardly complete when the practical proof of his prescience came. Thus, in writing the history of Frederick he was dealing with no dead past, but with matters of vital moment to the Europe of his own day.

The second point was the strength of Frederick. No man ever attracted Carlyle unless he was strong; and for the sake of strength he was prepared to pardon many things. Sir Henry Taylor in his *Autobiography* remarks on the strangeness of what he believes to be the fact that such a man as Carlyle should have chosen as the object of his idolatry "'iste stultorum magister'—Success," and tells an amusing story in illustration. "Long before his life of Cromwell came out, I heard him insisting in conversation on the fact that Cromwell had been invariably successful; and having with much satisfaction traced the long line of his successes to the end, he added, 'it is true they got him out of his grave at the Restoration and they stuck his head up over the gate at Tyburn, but not till he had quite done with it[2].'" This conversation

[1] *Cromwell*, i. 54. [2] Taylor's *Autobiography*, i. 329.

evidently remained in Carlyle's memory, for the concluding phrase appears in his *Cromwell.*

The story is thoroughly characteristic, but Taylor has misinterpreted it. Success was never a god of Carlyle's idolatry: such idolatry on his part would be more than strange; it would be inconceivable, because contradictory of his whole nature. Mere success, measured by any ordinary standard, he regarded with contempt. Sauerteig finds the word Hell in frequent use among the English people and investigates its meaning; for "the Hells of men and Peoples differ notably. With Christians it is the infinite terror of being found guilty before the Just Judge. With old Romans, I conjecture, it was the terror not of Pluto, for whom probably they cared little, but of doing unworthily, doing unvirtuously, which was their word for un*man*fully. And now what is it, if you pierce through his Cants, his oft-repeated Hearsays, what he calls his Worships and so forth,—what is it that the modern English soul does, in very truth, dread infinitely, and contemplate with entire despair? What *is* his Hell, after all these reputable, oft-repeated Hearsays, what is it? With hesitation, with astonishment, I pronounce it to be: The terror of 'Not succeeding'; of not making money, fame, or some other figure in the world,—chiefly of not making money! Is not this a somewhat singular Hell[1]?" Notice again that the two heroes whom he chooses as representatives of the class of men of letters are men whom he declares to have fought bravely and fallen. Goethe fought and won, and would therefore, but for other considerations, have been the better hero; but failure does not annul the heroism. One of the many thoughts of Browning which might have been thoughts of Carlyle—which *were* thoughts of Carlyle—is that which finds such noble expression in *Rabbi Ben Ezra.* It is not on the vulgar mass called "work" that sentence must be pronounced:

> "All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me
> This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

Except by an accident of expression, it was not "success" that Carlyle valued in Cromwell; but he saw that success won through

[1] *Past and Present,* 125.

such strife as Cromwell passed through was the voucher for the power behind by which it was won. It was the fruit by which the tree might be known.

Carlyle valued Might, but not Success. The close relation which he asserted to exist between Might and Right was a difficulty to many of his disciples and an offence to multitudes who were not disciples. "Might and Right do differ frightfully from hour to hour; but give them centuries to try it in, they are found to be identical[1]." "All fighting...is the dusty conflict of strengths, each thinking itself the strongest, or in other words, the justest;—of Mights which do in the long-run, and forever will in this just Universe in the long-run, mean Rights[2]." The repulsion with which many have regarded this doctrine, which they look upon as a mere deification of bare force, has arisen from their failure to see that the order of the words may be reversed, and that with quite as much truth it may be said that Right is Might. In a passage immediately following the one last quoted, Carlyle himself points this out:—"Howel Davies dyes the West-Indian Seas with blood, piles his decks with plunder; approves himself the expertest Seaman, the daringest Seafighter: but he gains no lasting victory, lasting victory is not possible for him. Not, had he fleets larger than the combined British Navy all united with him in bucaniering. He, once for all, cannot prosper in his duel. He strikes down his man: yes; but his man, or his man's representative, has no notion to lie struck down; neither, though slain ten times, will he keep so lying;—nor has the Universe any notion to keep him so lying! On the contrary, the Universe and he have, at all moments, all manner of motives to start up again, and desperately fight again. Your Napoleon is flung out, at last, to St Helena; the latter end of him sternly compensating the beginning. The Bucanier strikes down a man, a hundred or a million men: but what profits it? He has one enemy never to be struck down; nay two enemies: Mankind and the Maker of Men[3]." Surely there was never a more robust faith in the justice of the Universe. Might is Right only in the sense in which the

[1] *Chartism*, 158. [2] *Past and Present*, 164. [3] *ibid.* 164–165.

two terms are convertible. So interpreted, the phrase may seem to be an identical proposition; but it is not so.

Froude states that Carlyle had never read Aristotle's *Politics*. If he had read it, he would have found there several of his own theories. Aristotle said that "the conqueror is always superior in respect of some good or other." Carlyle's idea of the relation between power and right is similar in meaning to Aristotle's, though it is differently expressed. The condition—"give them centuries to try it in"—is Carlyle's way of ensuring that the force shall really be that most powerful kind which is based upon virtue. Some of his applications of the doctrine were, it must be admitted, terribly dangerous. But he could have found in Aristotle too an analogue to the fundamental principle on which he defended negro slavery and insisted on the *privilege* of the weak to be governed by the strong, the foolish by the wise. "It is the everlasting privilege of the foolish to be governed by the wise; to be guided on the right path by those who know it better than they. This is the first 'right of man'; compared with which all other rights are as nothing."

Admiring this strength, which, by the solidity and permanence of its results, he conceived to have proved its kinship if not its identity with virtue, Carlyle seized upon Frederick, and in that spirit treated his history. There is again something of the exaggeration of the worshipper. Sometimes Carlyle was tempted to make the worse appear the better reason, and to gloss over his hero's questionable actions. But when all deductions on this account are made, Carlyle's *Frederick the Great* remains probably on the whole the greatest of all his works. It is certainly the most massive. Nowhere else has he achieved such triumphs in the handling of materials; for nowhere else has he attempted such a task. It is the most extensive of all his galleries of portraits; and they are no less vivid than those contained in the earlier works. Frederick himself and his father, his generals and his opponents, the ambassadors at his court, Voltaire, Belleisle, Pitt, George II, Maria Theresa, Catherine II, Wilhelmina, high and low, men and women, are depicted, sometimes at length, sometimes in a sentence or two, but always admirably. There are fewer brilliant passages

than the *French Revolution* presents; but on the other hand there is nothing in the latter book quite as great as the treatment of Frederick's campaigns.

Chartism, *Past and Present* and the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* obviously belong to the group of works which deal with Carlyle's own generation. So does *Sartor Resartus*, of all his books the most original, and in some ways the greatest. In *Heroes and Hero-Worship* he goes back in history as far as Odin; but his own time is never absent from his mind. And the *Life of Sterling*, at once so charged with religion and so repugnant to orthodoxy, is as characteristic of Carlyle himself and as full of lessons to his own generation as anything he ever wrote. Among these books are included both the most popular, and, in their day, the most bitterly resented of all Carlyle's works.

In *Heroes and Hero-Worship* Carlyle quotes with approval the declaration of Fichte: "That all things which we see and work with on this Earth, especially we ourselves and all persons, are as a kind of vesture or sensuous appearance: that under all there lies, as the essence of them, what he calls the 'Divine Idea of the World.'" His favourite lines of verse were those spoken by the Earth Spirit in *Faust*, and already quoted, and Shakespeare's:—

> "We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep."

Idealistic conceptions envelope all his thought, and make him loathe the "dismal sciences" and "cause-and-effect philosophies" of his time. These, he was convinced, dealt only with appearance, with the mere mechanism of the world, while the moving principle lay altogether deeper; and the whole treatment was made false by the failure to recognise its character, or even its existence. The whole clothes-philosophy is a humorous and fantastic application of this principle. It was this which put Carlyle in such pronounced opposition to the popular opinion of his time. He had to create the mind to understand and the taste to enjoy himself. Jeffrey, a survival of the eighteenth century school of criticism, told him at an early stage of his career that he

was "a sectary in taste and literature." Napier of the *Edinburgh Review*, in accepting the great essay entitled *Characteristics*, confessed that he did not understand it, though he saw in it the stamp of genius[1].

In every respect Carlyle was to his contemporaries an enigma. He was an enigma in his politics. He believed himself to be, and in truth he was, one of the most thoroughgoing of Radicals; and yet he poured contempt on those who called themselves by that name, and on all their nostrums. For "Ballot-boxes, Reform Bills, winnowing machines[2]" he has little respect. He declares democracy to be inevitable, to be indeed here; and he adds that it is not a form of government at all. No ballot-boxes will guide the state aright, any more than unanimity of voting will navigate a ship round Cape Horn. "On this side of the Atlantic and on that, Democracy, we apprehend, is for ever impossible!...The Universe itself is a Monarchy and Hierarchy....The Noble in the high place, the Ignoble in the low, that is, in all times and in all countries, the Almighty Maker's Law[3]." For Conservatives, on the other hand, he had the warning that "Truth and Justice alone are *capable* of being 'conserved' and preserved[4]."

In religion likewise all parties in turn found Carlyle impracticable. He had no belief whatever in the dogmatic part of Christianity. While he regarded the whole universe as miraculous, he was utterly incredulous of the specific miracle which consisted in a violation or suspension of the law of that universe. The *Life of Sterling* was a revelation to many, especially to men of the Coleridgean school, of the negative character of Carlyle's views on this question; but the fact that a revelation was needed is a proof how ill they had comprehended his earlier works. And yet, on the other hand, it was plain on almost every page that Carlyle was one of the most religious of men. To him, religion was the chief fact about a man; and his quarrel with the eighteenth century had its root in the irreligion of that time.

Carlyle then was to all sects and parties a speaker of things unwelcome. It is no matter for surprise that he was long un-

[1] Froude's *Carlyle*, ii. 245.
[2] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 19.
[3] *Past and Present*, 72.
[4] *Past and Present*, 142.

popular; it is rather the most eloquent tribute to his vast power and to the fundamental rightness and goodness and truth of his doctrine that at length he won recognition and conquered popularity. His services have been great, greater than they have ever yet been acknowledged to be. Two charges have been often brought against him which demand a brief investigation. The first is the charge of self-contradiction. It is easily enough established by following the plan of taking this passage and that from different parts of his writings and setting them against one another. In this way, for example, he might be made to appear a pronounced individualist or a rampant socialist. To the orthodox, as we have just seen, he is irreligious; to the materialist, he might seem superstitious. He denounced *laissez faire*, "Competition and Devil take the hindmost," and, in a word, poured anathemas on all political economy. Yet he admitted that the regulation of life by the wisest of mediæval religious minds would have made modern Europe a Thibet. In his own day he saw men under a system of *laissez faire* distributing themselves over a new continent; and he declared that it was done on the whole with wonderful success.

To some extent the contradiction is real and is a flaw in Carlyle. In his emphatic way he exaggerated that which threatened to be neglected, and depreciated or ignored what he conceived to figure too prominently. In a democratic society he thought the lesson of order more important than that of freedom; and hence he sometimes wrote as if the latter need not be considered at all. The defect of *Past and Present* is that the past is idealised, and the present painted in hues of unnatural blackness. In *Latter-Day Pamphlets* the denunciations are shrill and unmeasured. But to a larger extent Carlyle can be defended on the ground that the seeming contradictions are both true. He had not studied Kant's antinomies in vain. Thus, there is no real contradiction between the individualistic and the socialistic elements in his political philosophy; pure individualism and pure socialism being alike impossible extremes, and wise statesmanship consisting in discovering the just mean between them.

The second and, if it were true, by far the more serious

objection to Carlyle is that his work has borne no fruit in practice, that he denounced modern society and yet failed to show how it was to be improved. The answer of more sympathetic critics is the true one. It seems to us as if this were the case because in so many instances what Carlyle denounced has been reformed, and what he recommended has been done or is in process of being done. No one any longer defends *laissez faire* as alone a sufficient principle of government; and no one did so much as Carlyle to turn the mind of the country against it. He insisted upon the organisation of labour as "the universal vital Problem of the World[1]." When he wrote, labour was regarded as a thing which would organise itself and must be left to do so. Now, it is recognised by all that, however difficult it may be of solution, this problem does exist and must be faced. The difference between the political economy of the present day and that which he denounced is a tribute to the wisdom of Carlyle: in no small degree it is due to his influence. The science of abstract laws has disappeared; a science based on concrete facts is taking its place. With Carlyle's aid we see as it was never seen before how much is assumed in the phrase "*free* competition"; but if the freedom be real, the law of competition is perhaps the safest of all laws. There may be a doubt whether Carlyle would have admitted this; and yet he has stated the principle clearly enough in pointing out the possible effects of "benevolence." "Incompetent Duncan M'Pastehorn, the hapless incompetent mortal to whom I give the cobbling of my boots,—and cannot find in my heart to refuse it, the poor drunken wretch having a wife and ten children; he *withdraws* the job from sober, plainly competent, and meritorious Mr Sparrowbill, generally short of work too; discourages Sparrowbill; teaches him that he too may as well drink and loiter and bungle; that this is not a scene for merit and demerit at all, but for dupery, and whining flattery, and incompetent cobbling of every description;—clearly tending to the ruin of poor Sparrowbill! What harm had Sparrowbill done me that I should so help to ruin him? And I couldn't *save* the insalvable M'Pastehorn; I merely yielded him, for insufficient work, here and

[1] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 31.

there a half-crown,—which he oftenest drank. And now Sparrowbill also is drinking[1]!" Bastiat's "What we see" and "What we do not see," is not more vivid. There is nowhere a better argument for really *free* competition.

Elsewhere, in *Past and Present*, he points out with faultless accuracy the real aim to be kept in view, and defines the true work of this vast "organisation of labour." "Day's work for day's wages?...The Progress of Human Society consists even in this same, The better and better apportioning of wages to work. Give me this, you have given me all. Pay every man accurately what he has worked for, what he has earned and deserved,—to this man broad lands and honours, to that man high gibbets and tread-mills; what more have I to ask? Heaven's Kingdom, which we daily pray for, *has* come; God's will is done on Earth even as it is in Heaven! This *is* the radiance of Celestial Justice; in the light or in the fire of which all impediments, vested interests, iron cannon, are more and more melting like wax, and disappearing from the pathways of men[2]."

Behind everything in Carlyle lay an unalterable belief in the Law of the Universe, which was his Religion, and a conviction that this law was identical with Truth and Justice—the only things capable of being conserved. No one ever preached this doctrine more consistently; and, what is more difficult, no one ever lived more consistently in accordance with it. No higher standard of truth than Carlyle's has ever been held before the world. Neither by word, nor by action, nor by refraining from action, would he palter with the truth. For this lesson alone, if it owed him nothing else, the world would have cause to rank him among its great men.

[1] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 57–58. [2] *Past and Present*, 17.

PART I

SPECULATIVE THOUGHT

CHAPTER I

THEOLOGY

THE surest and easiest way to penetrate the thought of any age is to study it in the systematic thinkers. The same ideas may possibly be more profoundly expressed in poetry; but they will certainly be more elusive; for, while it is the philosopher's business to express definite opinions, no one reproaches the poet if he only sees visions and dreams dreams.

Speculative thought falls into three great divisions, closely related in theory, but in practice often widely divergent. Science in most of its branches stands apart, and as a rule scarcely infringes upon literature at all; but in the nineteenth century it cannot be ignored. Theology ought to be the complement of philosophy, holding towards the latter the place of high-mindedness in the Aristotelian scheme of the virtues, and in fact Aristotle uses the word θεολογική as equivalent to ontology. But we must set it down as one of the results of creeds that the true relation is always obscured and sometimes completely lost. In England especially, the connexion of theology with philosophy is often very slight.

It will be most convenient to take the theologians first. In earlier times they themselves might have claimed priority on the

score of the dignity of "the queen of the sciences"; but such assertions of superiority are a little discredited, and of late "the queen of the sciences" has fallen on evil days. A better reason for priority can, however, be assigned; for, whatever may be thought of the comparative endowments of the philosophers and the theologians, the latter have in the Victorian period exercised the more potent influence upon literature.

The theologians of this period are divisible into four groups,—the Evangelicals, who at the start were by far the most powerful; the Noetics, and their successors of the Broad Church; the followers of Coleridge; and, by far the most interesting of all, the exponents of the Catholic Reaction, which is known in England as the Oxford Movement.

The feet of men have travelled far from the ground on which they stood at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It would be fruitless to compare the opinions of men who simply rejected supernatural religion. There were multitudes who did so then, as there are multitudes still. But *ex nihilo nihil fit*: we learn nothing from a mere negation: we may learn much from the differences between those who are in partial agreement. In a passage published in 1893, Charles Pearson gave some data from which may be measured the distance that separates the thought of the present day from thought just a little less modern:—"Professor Agassiz, whom many still living can remember with affection and reverence, was brought up under teachers who held that God had scattered fossils about the world as a test of faith[1]; and an Oxford teacher of the highest local repute at least thirty years later published his belief that the typical vertebra—a column with lateral processes—was multiplied all over the world as a proof of the Crucifixion[2]. A little later an Oxford divine, the accredited head of a great party in the Church, was consulting with an Oxford anatomist to know if it was not possible to point to a whale that might have swallowed Jonah[3]." Illustrations might

[1] Professor Agassiz told me this himself. (The notes are Pearson's.)
[2] *Christian Ethics*, by the Rev. W. Sewell.
[3] *National Life and Character*, 305.

easily be multiplied. In 1859, the year of Darwin's great book, the Bampton lecturer, Rawlinson, gravely assumed the accuracy of the biblical chronology from Adam. In 1864, eleven thousand clergy signed a declaration on inspiration and eternal punishment, the effect of which, according to Archibald Campbell Tait, then Bishop of London, and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, was that "all questions of physical science should be referred to the written words of Holy Scripture." Still later, in 1890, no less a person than William Ewart Gladstone wrote *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, whose purpose was, not indeed to test physical science by Scripture, but to show that, after all the assaults of astronomy, geology and biology, the early chapters of Genesis stood undamaged.

Gladstone, however, was contemporary with Agassiz, and had been educated in an age when it was not impossible for intelligent men to believe that fossils were meant to be a test of faith. There are numerous evidences of change within the Churches themselves. In 1843, Chalmers, Guthrie and the other leaders of the Scottish Disruption, went out into the wilderness, a Bible in one hand and the Westminster Confession of Faith in the other. The doctrine of predestination had no terrors to them. *Holy Willie's Prayer* had been written; but the "New Licht" succumbed to the "Auld Licht"; and it is certain that men who put everything to the touch, as they did, believed in all sincerity of mind the creed they professed. And in those days the interpretation of the creed in question was that which Burns so vigorously expresses. Fifty years later their successors have become uneasy, and a Declaratory Act is needed to disburden troubled consciences. Now, the doctrine of 1843 seems to find its only safe home among some score of Highland congregations. In England, evidences of similar change may be seen on every side. It is unnecessary to go to the heterodox or to the doubtfully orthodox. The biblical chronology is abandoned; the word "inspiration" has wholly changed its meaning; a profound silence is observed with regard to the doctrine of eternal punishment. Bishops and dignitaries of the Church pick and choose among the miracles,

and invent marvellous hypotheses to reconcile the doctrine of the fall with the theory of evolution[1].

If this great change—almost a revolution—be not borne in mind, it will be difficult to understand the position at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Then, the idea of an infallible Book was easy and simple: it was readily accepted with little or no qualification. On the other hand, the conception of an infallible Church had scarcely any hold in England; and no one yet dreamed of attempting to reduce the Reformation, so far as the Anglican Communion is concerned, to the dimensions of a storm in a tea-cup. Circumstances therefore were favourable for the Evangelicals; and accordingly we find them throned in high places. It is true, their power had passed its zenith, and their fervour was already declining. The disintegrating forces of eighteenth century philosophy told upon the theologians; and even Christian apologists, like Butler, were profoundly influenced by them. Nevertheless, they were in the main stream of ecclesiastical life. In the Baptist Robert Hall (1764–1831) they possessed the most powerful preacher of the time, and, in the opinion of Coleridge, the master of the best style in English. It was they who made converts. When Thomas Scott (1747–1821) became convinced of the error of Unitarianism, it was to the Calvinistic Evangelicals that he attached himself; and his commentary on the Bible is written on strictly evangelical principles. Scripture is the sole test of Scripture: there is no appeal against the infallible Book; and the only criticism permissible is that which throws light upon one part by showing how it is explained by another. Newman speaks of Scott as the man "to whom (humanly speaking) I almost owe my soul[2]." Charles Simeon (1759–1836) of Cambridge, who is commemorated in Shorthouse's *Sir Percival*, is said to have had a following of young men larger even than that of Newman. It was the Evangelicals also who produced the most scholarly work of the time. No contemporary divines did work as solid as Scott's *Commentary*, already mentioned, or Simeon's *Horae Homileticae*.

[1] See articles by Mr W. H. Mallock in *XIX Century* for September, November and December, 1904, and replies by the Rev. Prebendary Whitworth and the Rev. H. Maynard Smith.

[2] *Apologia*, 5.

The foundation is unsatisfactory, the method unphilosophical, and the conclusions often quaint; but, granted their presuppositions, these men were thorough.

An interesting feature of the Evangelicals is the ease with which the Church and the Dissenting sections of the party fraternise[1]. Thackeray in the *Newcomes* has drawn a picture of Clapham which gives the impression that the "sect" which had its centre there was a sect of Dissenters. Macaulay, who knew the place and the sect thoroughly, declared that this was a mistake. "The leading people of the place," says his biographer, "with the exception of Mr William Smith, the Unitarian member of Parliament, were one and all staunch Churchmen; though they readily worked in concert with those religious communities which held in the main the same views and pursued the same objects as themselves[2]." But in truth, among the evangelical party the question of Church or Dissent was a small matter in comparison with that of unity or difference of aim. Their theory of the Church emphasised its Protestant character and minimised the points of resemblance between it and the Church of Rome. The more earnest among them devoted themselves to efforts for moral and social reform, and above all to the great struggle for the emancipation of slaves. In this they got little help from the bench of bishops or from the aristocracy, while they got much from nonconformist ministers and from the wealthy laymen who were influenced by these. It is the lasting glory of the evangelical party that this great reform was mainly their work. Whatever may be the merits or the faults of their theology, or of their views about the Church, they gave to the Christian doctrine of the brotherhood of man one of the greatest practical applications it has ever received.

The Evangelicals are also by far the richest of all the divisions of theologians in literary connexions. Carlyle, Macaulay, Browning, Ruskin and George Eliot all came under Calvinistic and evan-

[1] It must be observed that this is true only of the Evangelicals. Gladstone always believed that at Oxford he had run risk of rustication for the offence of attending Dissenting chapels. (Doyle's *Reminiscences*, 101.)

[2] *Life of Macaulay*, i. 61.

gelical influences; and though some of them wandered very far from the fold, they all bore to the end the marks of their early training and associations. Even Macaulay, the least speculative of them, spoke in later days of "the bray of Exeter Hall"; but it was Macaulay also who drew the pointed contrast between the condition of Protestant Europe and that of Catholic Europe, which has been to many the most convincing of all arguments against Popery.

Yet, though the Evangelicals were the heirs of the past and the possessors of the present, they had not the power to transmit their inheritance to the coming generation in their own line. The English Simeons and Scotts and Halls begat no sons. For representatives of their school of a later day we must look northward, to Scotland, where, since the days of Knox, their modes of thought had been far more firmly rooted than they ever were in England.

No one can fail to be impressed by the striking similarity, and the difference no less striking, between the ecclesiastical position in Scotland and that in England during the fourth and fifth decades of the nineteenth century. In the latter country, the Oxford Movement began in 1833; and we may date its culmination either in 1843, when Newman resigned his charge of St Mary's, Oxford, and retracted the strictures which he had formerly passed on the Church of Rome; or in 1845, when he was formally received into the Roman Communion. In Scotland, the Ten Years' Conflict issued in 1843 in the great Disruption which drove 453 out of 1000 or 1100 ministers from the Established Church[1]. In England, Newman towers head and shoulders above all rivals on either side; in Scotland, Thomas Chalmers is as indisputably pre-eminent. In both countries, one effect was to stimulate the zeal and energy of all sections. But there the resemblance ends. In Scotland, the dispute was merely about the relation between Church and State, the ministers and congregations of the Disruption holding that the existing law of patronage compromised their spiritual freedom. They introduced no new type of Presbyterianism, and denied no dogma which had previously

[1] Cockburn's numbers (*Life of Jeffrey*, 380).

been accepted. On the contrary, their influence tended rather to retard than to accelerate change. In England, on the other hand, the whole principle of the Reformation was at stake. To Newman and his followers the right of private judgment was *anathema*. They wished to emphasise authority: *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*. They have attempted to re-write ecclesiastical history, maintaining that before the Reformation the English Church was a National Church, with a law of its own, and that though the canon law of Rome was "always regarded as of great authority in England," it "was not held to be binding on the Courts." And they seemed to have succeeded,—at any rate, the pronouncement of what were regarded as the highest authorities was to that effect,—until Maitland's *Roman Canon Law in the Church of England* shivered the theory into fragments.

Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847) was the most massive figure in ecclesiastical history during the nineteenth century. In mere learning many surpassed him. The flippant of his own day hinted that he was one of those who confounded Augustine of Hippo with Augustine of Canterbury[1]; and though this was doubtless a calumny, Carlyle was right in his stricture upon him as "a man essentially of little culture, of narrow sphere, all his life[2]." He was great in another and a larger sphere,—"a native ἄνοξ ἀνδρῶν," as the author of *Horae Subsecivae* well calls him. Like his countryman and contemporary, Scott, Chalmers would always have preferred the fame of the doer of great deeds to that of the writer of great books. And such was the fame that he won. If he were judged merely as a writer of books, he would hold but a secondary place. Neither in philosophy nor in theology did he originate anything. His *Moral and Mental Philosophy* leaves the science of ethics where he found it; his *Institutes of Theology* expounds the Calvinistic doctrine of his country with a docility remarkable in a man who had won his way to Calvinism through doubts that at one time verged upon atheism. Even the style does not support the author's contemporary reputation. It is rhetorical, often inflated, sometimes clumsy. He wrote in haste,

[1] Doyle's *Reminiscences*, 102.

[2] *Reminiscences: Edward Irving.*

and wrote far too copiously: it would have been well for his permanent fame if he had blotted three paragraphs out of every four which bear his name.

Yet Chalmers had unquestionably a gift for words as well as for action, and his best passages deserve a place in any anthology of prose. But his was the gift of the orator, rather than that of the writer. The touch of personal contact and sympathy was needed to kindle his imagination. Like sunlight on a landscape, it brightens what is already beautiful and irradiates with colour what is misty and obscure. The judgment of contemporaries proves Chalmers to have been one of the greatest orators who ever used the English language; and though a speech which is read never produces the effect of the same speech when spoken, there is ample evidence in his printed works that the judgment of contemporaries was sound.

Chalmers won this great reputation in spite of grave physical disadvantages. He was rugged, almost coarse, both in face and person, his movements were ungraceful, his accent strong and, to an English ear, extremely unpleasant. In his method of oratory he resembled those who take the kingdom of heaven by storm. Hazlitt compares him to Balfour of Burley in his cave, "with his Bible in one hand and his sword drawn in the other, contending with the imaginary enemy of mankind, gasping for breath, and with the cold moisture running down his face[1]." Yet audiences aristocratic and polished to the last degree, audiences who had no sympathy with the orator's theology, and to whom his accent was at first a pain, forgot all in the fervour and earnestness and sincerity of his eloquence, and saw in the uncouth figure in the pulpit not a mere man but an inspired prophet. "Fervit immensusque ruit," Dr John Brown quotes as illustrative of the compelling force of his eloquence. His London lectures (1838) were as strikingly successful as his *Discourses on the Christian Revelation* (1817), and these when they were published ran a neck-and-neck race for the prize of popularity with Scott's *Old Mortality*, which was published almost simultaneously[2].

[1] *The Spirit of the Age*, 'Rev. Mr Irving.'

[2] Hanna's *Memoirs of Dr Chalmers*, ii. 89.

There was one gift greater still which Chalmers possessed, the gift of ecclesiastical statesmanship. It is this which best ensures the permanency of his fame. Had he been an English politician, he might have left one of the greatest names in history; on the narrower stage of Scottish Churchmanship, he is the biggest figure since Knox. In his first parish of Kilmany he had little opportunity for the exercise of talents of this sort; but the bent of his mind revealed itself in the subject of an early work, the *Inquiry into the Extent and Stability of the National Resources* (1808), the purpose of which was to estimate the staying-power of England in the great struggle against Napoleon. With what a zest would the author have taken up the work of Pitt, if fortune had opened such a career to him! In 1815 Chalmers left Kilmany for the Tron parish, Glasgow, whence he migrated in 1820 to St John's, the most populous of the Glasgow parishes. There he first had the opportunity of showing his statesmanlike qualities; and the three or four years he spent in Glasgow are memorable not only in the history of Chalmers but in the social history of Scotland.

In the time of Chalmers Glasgow was a comparatively small place, its population in 1821 being only 147,000. But though the total population was not very great, the Industrial Revolution had already come; and no one as yet knew, few had seriously thought, how to deal with it. High prices, and the reaction after the great war, intensified the sufferings of the poor. Chalmers' parish included a larger percentage of the destitute than was to be found in any other quarter of the city. At the beginning of his administration the annual expenditure for the relief of the poor of St John's parish amounted to £1400. Chalmers asked and obtained from the Town Council a free hand to deal with the problem in his own way. In three years he had reduced the expenditure to £280; and he had at the same time greatly raised the standard of comfort among the poor. His principle was simple. Never a voluntary in matters of religion, Chalmers was always a voluntary in respect of poor-relief. He strongly opposed the levying of a poor-rate. He held that the rate not only lowered the character of the recipients, but dried up

the fountain of natural charity. Uphold the character of the poor at all costs, he urged; and bring home to the well-to-do their obligations towards their poorer neighbours, and above all towards their relatives. No one gave more striking evidence than he before the Commission appointed in 1832 to inquire into the administration of the poor-law; and, though the Commission did not go as far as Chalmers would have gone, the changes recommended and afterwards carried into effect went in the direction to which he pointed. It may be that such success as his could only have been achieved by a genius for administration like his own; but at least he proved that, in the right hands, his system was the right system.

While he was still at Glasgow, Chalmers conceived another scheme for improving the administration of the Church. He was a warm admirer of the parochial system: his whole scheme for the relief of the poor was based upon it; but he saw that the parochial system had come to need revision. His own parish was much too populous to be successfully administered by one man; and there were other parishes of Glasgow in almost as bad case. Chalmers came forward with a bold proposal to add twenty parishes to Glasgow alone,—or rather, by dividing the existing parishes to increase the total number by twenty. The scheme was rejected at the time; but afterwards it was taken up again and extended to the whole of Scotland, with the result that some 200 parishes *quoad sacra* were constituted.

In 1823 Chalmers left Glasgow for the chair of moral philosophy in St Andrews; and in 1828 he became professor of theology in the University of Edinburgh. His powerful personality, his eloquence and his transparent sincerity, gave him immense influence over his pupils; but it seemed improbable that he would ever again have the opportunity of bringing into play his greatest talent. The Disruption however gave him one more chance; and again he showed himself equal to the occasion. The task of organising 453 congregations and of making adequate provision for their ministers was a gigantic one. No single man, however great, could have accomplished it; only the united labours, the

liberality and the self-denial of thousands, could have made the Free Kirk of Scotland what she is—or was. But while this is true, Chalmers was the organising brain behind all. He invented the Sustentation Fund. His plan was the very genius of simplicity. By a simple arithmetical calculation he showed that a contribution of a penny a week from each member of the Kirk would provide a stipend of £150 a year for every minister. The iron was hot, and he struck. From the first the people recognised that if they would have spiritual independence they must pay for it. And they paid. At the date of the union of the Free and the United Presbyterian Kirks of Scotland, the *minimum* fixed by Chalmers was considerably exceeded.

It has seemed worth while to give this brief account of the work of Chalmers, because this is the essence both of his life and of his voluminous writings. Sustentation funds and schemes for the relief of the poor are not literature; neither are they theology; but they are highly practical Christianity, and they give the best insight into the spirit of the evangelical party—or rather of the evangelical great man; for to judge any party by its great man is to flatter that party. Moreover, they explain the narrowness, surprising in such a man, which Chalmers shows in speculation. It is impossible to read without a smile his quaint conception of the duty of the State to choose out one from among the rival sects, and to make that the organ of the national religion. The summary rejection of the Church of Rome, as obviously outside the sphere of choice, presents no difficulty to his mind; and the statesman, rather than the theologian, is apparent in the tolerance which would accept Episcopacy as the national form of religion in England; though of course Chalmers maintains the national form in Scotland to be Presbyterianism. In the earnestness of his desire for the moral and social good of the nation, Chalmers threw off all the rancour of the sectarian, and forgot all the logic of schemes of salvation rigidly limited to orthodox believers. Such latitudinarianism would have shocked alike his own predecessors, whose hatred of "black prelacy" found expression in many a fiery discourse, and his English Tractarian contemporaries,

who would have found few indeed of the "notes" of a Church in the State establishments contemplated by Chalmers.

The same speculative narrowness is manifested in the relation of Chalmers to German thought. He had long dreaded it, without knowing what it meant. At the very close of his life he believed himself to have discovered that it was all verbiage, and the last of his writings was an article in the *North British Review* explaining the vanity of the German philosophy. "It was," says Professor A. Campbell Fraser, "the first half of the nineteenth century in Scotland in a preparatory encounter with the second[1]."

Great as Chalmers was, some of those who supported him in the crisis of the Disruption were not unworthy of him. Probably the layman, Hugh Miller, deserves the second place. He claims notice elsewhere; but from 1840 till his death in 1856 he edited a bi-weekly paper, *The Witness*, which became the organ of the Free Kirk party, and which did excellent service to that party. Among the ministers, Chalmers' most powerful supporter was Thomas Guthrie (1803–1873), who on the death of the great leader became by repute the most eloquent of Scottish preachers. A reader of the sermons may detect a certain thinness of texture; but it is certain that they produced a great effect upon those who heard them. Guthrie's theological works are strictly popular in their character. It was, however, not Guthrie but Robert Smith Candlish (1806–1873) who inherited the mantle of statesmanship, and who was from the death of Chalmers to his own death the most influential man of the Free Kirk. Though less prominent as a theologian than as an ecclesiastical leader, he crossed swords with Maurice, not without credit, in an examination of the latter's *Theological Essays*.

For two or three years Edward Irving (1792–1834) was assistant to Chalmers in Glasgow; and for that reason his singular career may be briefly discussed here. His natural gifts were great. Carlyle, Chalmers and Connop Thirlwall were all judges of unquestionable competence, and two of them at least were inclined to severity; yet they have all borne witness to Irving's

[1] *Biographia Philosophica*, 132.

powers. But there was probably from the first a want of balance in his mind; and he was swept away by his own success as a preacher. Shortly after his removal to London in 1822, he became a disciple of Coleridge, whose mysticism fostered the latent mysticism in Irving's own mind. The latter soon announced his belief that the second advent of Christ was imminent. His followers prepared ascension robes, and made sparing provision for the needs of a world which was soon to pass away[1]. Delusion drew delusion in its train. The faithful spoke with tongues, which to the profane ear of Carlyle sounded like "a shrieky hysterical 'lall-lall-lall.'" There was little or nothing left of the sober Scottish Presbyterianism; and Irving's expulsion from his London church and from the presbytery of Annan was the natural consequence of his own excesses. A sadder result was the ruin of his brain. His works are little better than empty rhapsodies, and the founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church is merely *magni nominis umbra.*

Among the friends of Irving was one, John McLeod Campbell (1800–1872), who did far more for the liberalising of theological thought than has ever been adequately recognised. He was among the first to recoil from the generally accepted doctrine of the atonement, and he met the fate which so often befalls men who are in advance of their time, being in 1831 deprived of his ministerial charge. In this crisis he was warmly supported by Thomas Erskine (1788–1870) of Linlathen, one of those men who by their lives and by what they are rather than by what they write mould the thoughts of others. Erskine's views were perhaps most akin to those of Maurice, and the two were friends from their first meeting in 1838 till the death of the former. But while in Maurice there was something which repelled the intellect even though it won the heart, Erskine maintained his hold upon men of the most diverse opinions. He was, to begin with, among the most liberal of men, the friend not only of Irving and of Campbell and Maurice, but of Carlyle, who in turn loved and admired him

[1] Persons still living in Irving's native town remember believers who bought coal by the hundredweight, thinking it waste to buy tons when the end of the world was so near.

to the end. He speaks of Erskine as "one of the gentlest, kindliest, best bred of men," and compares him to "a draught of sweet rustic *mead*, served in cut glasses and a silver tray[1]."

Campbell's views were first expressed in *Sermons and Lectures* (1832), and afterwards more fully in *The Nature of the Atonement* (1856) and in *Thoughts on Revelation* (1862). The chief point in his speculation was the universality of the atonement. It was a conception which cut across too many prejudices to be generally accepted either in Scotland or in England; but yet Campbell did not work in vain. Even those who would reject his doctrine do not think as they would have thought had he never lived and written.

Men like these transgress the bounds of evangelicalism in one way; the Noetics did so in another. Though between the greatest of the Evangelicals and the Noetics there is a manifest kinship, yet the latter breathed a different atmosphere. They were the "intelligent" of the Church, the men who laid emphasis on the "intelligible," the men to whom *credo quia impossibile* would itself have been impossible. In short, "Noetic" is "rationalistic" softened through the mist of the Greek language, so that to clerical ears it did not suggest all the dire associations of the latter word. It is difficult to read without a smile the explanations of friends of the Noetics that their rationalism is not the bad sort of rationalism[2]. They seem to find the same sort of comfort in this that the child, fascinated and yet terrified by the story of a bear, finds in the assurance that this particular animal is a *good* bear.

At first the Noetics belonged to no single section of the Church; still less were they a section by themselves. Copleston, opposed as he was to Tractarianism, is best described as a High Churchman of the old school; and Hampden's affinities were with the Evangelicals. But as the sense came home to men that νοητικός, in some of its developments, seemed twin brother to "rationalistic," both the orthodox High and the orthodox Evangelical were alike eager to repudiate those who, shortly after the

[1] Froude's *Carlyle*, iii. 127.

[2] Cf. J. T. Coleridge, in Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, i. 20.

middle of the century, came to be known as the Broad Churchmen. If Noetic was a translation of Rationalist into Greek, it is significant to notice that Broad Churchman[1] is a translation of Latin into Saxon; for as the years rolled on, there was less disposition to be diffident or apologetic in the application of that dreaded instrument, reason, to matters of religion; perhaps there was a more generous confidence that what was essential in religion had nothing to fear from the application.

The Noetics made no original contributions to thought, but they are interesting for their very deficiencies, no less than for their merits. They were excessively insular. They knew nothing about Kant; nor was this ignorance of German philosophy, which they shared with the majority of their English contemporaries, redeemed by any profound acquaintance with the thought of France. They knew very little about the theories which had given birth to the French Revolution; but they had unconsciously adopted their central principle. They are interesting because they are among the earliest and among the most uncompromising advocates at Oxford of reason as against authority. They were the "liberals" who at a later date were the objects of the dislike and dread of Newman and the Tractarians; and fear of the results of their teaching had no small influence in causing, or at any rate in precipitating, the Tractarian reaction. The Noetics themselves did not foresee all the consequences of their own teaching, nor was its full effect manifest for many years after. Jowett as an undergraduate saw but the rudiments of the changes initiated by them. In a letter written in 1865, he comments upon the significance of the development which had subsequently taken place. "When I was an undergraduate," he says, "we were fed upon Bishop Butler and Aristotle's *Ethics*, and almost all teaching leaned to the support of doctrines of authority. Now there are new subjects, Modern History and Physical Science, and more important than these, perhaps, is the real study of metaphysics in the *Literae Humaniores* school—every man in the last ten years who goes in for honours has read Bacon, and probably Locke,

[1] "Church," of course, is ultimately Greek; but the distinguishing word here is "broad."

Mill's *Logic*, Plato, Aristotle, and the history of ancient philosophy. See how impossible this makes a return to the old doctrines of authority[1]."

In the ecclesiastical battle the victory lay with the reactionaries, and Jowett well knew it. Five years after the date of the letter just quoted we find him prophesying that "in another ten years half the English clergy will be given up to a fetish-worship of the Sacrament"; and time has proved the substantial truth of his words. The Broad Churchmen have founded no school; there are no crowds following in the steps of Copleston and Arnold, of Jowett and Stanley; but the name of those who follow and who strive to outdo Keble and Pusey, is legion. The fact is not surprising. It is far easier to think the thoughts (or at any rate to repeat the formulae) of ten centuries ago, than to think the thoughts of ten years in advance. The victors in the ecclesiastical strife have been conquered in the field of thought; and the battle for influence over the minds of the young has gone irretrievably against the principle of authority. The change to which Jowett calls attention is of incalculable importance. It is a change of spirit, not of subjects. There are no better subjects than Aristotle and Butler. But Aristotle and Butler, treated as semi-inspired "authorities," are very different from the same philosophers treated as factors in a "real study of metaphysics." Now, so far as Oxford was concerned, the initiators of this change were the Noetics; and therefore, though we can trace to them no original contribution to thought, though they are very evidently hampered, and though their usefulness is lessened, by their ignorance of the development of European philosophy, they deserve an honourable place in the history of English thought in the nineteenth century.

Oriel College, Oxford, was the centre of the Noetics, as it was afterwards of Tractarianism. Copleston was its Provost from 1814 to 1828; and Whately, Hampden and Thomas Arnold were among the fellows. Copleston was a man of powerful intellect, of profound scholarship and of varied interests; but he left his mark

[1] *Life and Letters*, i. 412.

less on literature than on the College which he ruled and on the diocese—Llandaff—which he administered in his later years. Hampden is recollected mainly because of the envenomed controversy of which he, an amiable and mild man, became the subject when, in 1836, he was made by Lord Melbourne Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford. It was a controversy in which Hampden suffered in feeling, and in which some of his opponents —among them Newman—suffered in reputation; for they were unscrupulous in their choice of weapons. Arnold is remembered as a great schoolmaster and a historian, rather than as a theologian. But he was intensely interested in religion, watched the Tractarian movement closely, and was far too vehement to keep clear of the controversies it occasioned. He objected strongly to the doctrine of apostolical succession, and thought the argument from primitive episcopacy to episcopacy as it existed in the nineteenth century absurd. In more ways than one, Arnold stood between two extremes. On the one hand, he was a liberal (in the ecclesiastical as well as in the political sense of the word), and on the other he was profoundly religious. He was a convinced Churchman; and yet he looked with favour on the idea of a comprehension of Dissenters, provided it were "comprehension without compromise." His views were expressed in a pamphlet on *The Principles of Church Reform* (1833), which was condemned alike by Church and by Dissent. Whether Arnold's position was ultimately tenable or not may be questioned. Carlyle thought it was not; and there is a passage in the letters of Matthew Arnold which suggests that he shared Carlyle's doubt. But there can be no question about Thomas Arnold's perfect sincerity. He was fully convinced of the essential rightness of the Church of England, and he never doubted that there was a place within its fold for people who, like himself, reasoned upon its dogmas boldly, and, as he believed, without such bias as to warp the judgment.

The Noetic spirit was incarnate in Richard Whately (1787–1863), who is better known as a philosopher than as a theologian. But he contributed no new principle to philosophy, and his influence was chiefly the influence of a teacher. His *Logic* (1826) and his *Rhetoric* (1828) are both excellent little text-

books; and the former is especially noteworthy for its effect in reviving a study which had fallen into neglect. The best part of it is the treatment of fallacies, where Whately shows qualities of mind of which he had given a foretaste in his *Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Buonaparte* (1819). Though the *Rhetoric* and the *Logic* are not permanent possessions of philosophy, yet their author left a lasting mark, and a deeper one than any other of the Noetics except Arnold. His powerful intellect and his masterful personality, which became despotic after he had risen to be Archbishop, attracted some and repelled others, but left none indifferent. His wit, generally pungent and sometimes corrosive, branded his sayings on the memory. His extraordinary manners, or want of manners, deepened the effect. "He ate and drank and joked," says Blanco White in a letter to Newman, "like Hercules in the Alcestis[1]." Sir Henry Taylor ascribes his eccentricities to "a strange unconsciousness of the body"; and it is not easy to account otherwise for the things he did. Taylor was assured by the wife of one of the Lord-Lieutenants of Ireland, next to whom Whately's rank placed him when he dined at the Castle, that "she had occasionally to remove the Archbishop's foot from her lap[2]." Such doings would have blasted the career of an ordinary man; but Whately rose in spite of them, and as it was impossible to ignore him or to dismiss him as a lunatic, they fixed interest and attention upon him all the more. The growing imperiousness of his character did however in later years limit his circle chiefly to weaklings and sycophants. But though the tendency was always there, those whom he influenced in his Oxford days were neither weaklings nor sycophants. Newman, his Vice-Principal at Alban Hall, was one; and though they were too diverse in disposition to remain friends permanently, Newman continued to be Whately's disciple long enough to draw weapons from the armoury of the latter which he afterwards used for ends by no means congenial to Whately.

In theology, Whately's principal work was the *Kingdom of Christ Delineated* (1841). Among his formal works may be mentioned *Essays on the Errors of Romanism* (1830) and *Essays*

[1] Newman's *Letters*, i. 187. [2] *Autobiography*, i. 322.

on some Difficulties in Paul (1828). These and his other theological writings are exceedingly acute; but they do not, any more than his philosophical works, embody any great original thought. Like most of the productions of the Noetic school, they are too negative. Powerful for destruction when turned against either Low Church or High Church, Whately's arguments substitute nothing for the systems which he shows to be untenable. The truth seems to be that Whately, though sincere in his religion, was deficient in fervour. He believed with the head: it would be unfair and untrue to say that he did not feel with the heart; but at least the emotional was less than the intellectual part. The defect was fatal. Whately's influence was great; but it showed itself more, perhaps, in the reaction which he helped to provoke, than in the winning of converts and followers. He was destitute of that personal attractiveness which drew boys to the side of Arnold, and kept them there after they had grown to be men.

Something was needed to supplement and to enrich the positive teaching of the Noetics; and it was supplied by the importation of the ideas of German philosophy. Henceforth, the most vital distinction in English theology is that between those who know and who accept the principles of Kant and Hegel and Fichte and Schleiermacher, and those who either do not know or do not understand them, or who are afraid to apply them. "Germanism" was dreaded in the circles of the orthodox at least as much as rationalism: "omne ignotum pro—horribili." As seen, however, through the cloudy magnificence of the prose monologues of Coleridge, "Germanism" took the shape of a friend to faith, rather than an enemy[1]. The principal disciples were Julius Hare, Maurice and Kingsley; but many who were not disciples felt the influence of Coleridge, and some became imbued with "Germanism" who did not understand the German language. Even a man so widely different as John Stuart Mill was influenced.

"Germanism" in theology reached out one hand towards the Tractarians, and the other towards the Broad Churchmen. The

[1] I refer to the impression left by Coleridge upon contemporaries. Mr Benn's *History of English Rationalism in the XIX Century* shows clearly enough that Coleridge was a dangerous ally to the Church party.

Tractarians were usually innocent of all knowledge of the meaning of "Germanism"; but the mystic element, that in it which appealed to feeling rather than understanding, that which might be called the romanticism of philosophy, was akin to their spirit. Hence the baseless supposition that Coleridge or that Carlyle was responsible for the Oxford Movement. At a later date too German idealism has become acquainted with strange bedfellows, and has been used as an instrument by the modern High Church party. Nevertheless, its true relations are with the other side; its true function has been to mediate the transition from the older Noetics to the more recent Broad Churchmen.

A certain ineffectiveness characterises the Coleridgeans, just as it characterised Coleridge himself. Even Kingsley, it has been said with truth, remained a boy, though a glorious boy, all his life. Sterling's failure may be set down to ill-health and to his early death; but the remains he has left certainly fall short of greatness; and Carlyle, the affectionate friend of the man, was disappointed in the author. Sterling's first biographer and *quondam* rector, Julius Hare, joint author with his brother Augustus of *Guesses at Truth*, has lost that power over the mind which the testimony of contemporaries assures us that he once possessed. But the most typical Coleridgean was Frederick Denison Maurice (1805–1872), who himself passed through some of the spiritual experiences of his master. He came of a Unitarian family, left Cambridge without a degree, then, after an interval, went to Oxford, graduated, and took holy orders. His theological opinions were too liberal for the time; and in 1853 he was dismissed from his professorship of theology in King's College, London. He was unsound on the question of eternal punishment; and to save a doctrine so precious his services were dispensed with. But though he was judged unfit in 1853 to teach theology in London, the University of Cambridge thirteen years later was proud to receive him as a teacher of morals.

Maurice best illustrates the ineffectiveness of the Coleridgeans. Those who knew the man testify convincingly to the greatness of his powers; but the consensus as to the unsatisfactory character of the result is still more remarkable. On the one hand, Tennyson

thought him the greatest mind of all the Metaphysical Society[1]. "For merely intellectual power, apart from poetical genius," Mill considered Maurice to be decidedly superior even to his master, Coleridge; and Kingsley pronounced him "a great and rare thinker." On the other hand, Mill thought his power was wasted; Carlyle found him "one of the most entirely uninteresting men of genius"; and Mrs Carlyle was "never in his company without being attacked with a sort of paroxysm of mental cramp." Ruskin, again, pronounces Maurice "puzzle-headed, and, though in a beautiful manner, wrong-headed." The Carlyles had a pungent style, and in their judgments of contemporaries they seldom erred on the side of leniency; while Ruskin might possibly be prejudiced by the correspondence on the *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds*, wherein Maurice certainly held his own. But their judgment is borne out by multitudes of others. Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff "never carried away one clear idea, or even the impression that he [Maurice] had more than the faintest conception of what he himself meant." Aubrey de Vere compared listening to him to eating pea-soup with a fork. Matthew Arnold speaks of him as "always beating the bush with profound emotion, but never starting the hare"; and Huxley writes in 1863, probably with reference to *The Claims of the Bible and of Science*: "Maurice has sent me his book. I have read it, but I find myself utterly at a loss to comprehend his point of view[2]."

A perusal of Maurice's works confirms these unfavourable opinions. The mistiness, as well as the mysticism, of Coleridge hangs about them; and it is not so evident that they have the permanent suggestiveness of the great poet's prose. Since Maurice's death, the circle—never very wide—of those who are directly influenced by him has greatly narrowed. He was greater as a man than as a writer; it was mainly those who felt the magnetism of his pure, unselfish character who read his works; and that generation has almost passed away. His *Kingdom of Christ* (1838); his presentation to a Quaker of his own views regarding

[1] *Life of Tennyson*, ii. 168.

[2] Most of these quotations will be found in the *Library of Literary Criticism*.

the Catholic Church; his *Doctrine of Sacrifice* (1854), wherein with questionable success he attempted to buttress the doctrine of the atonement by showing how often one being suffers for the act of another; his *Theological Essays* (1853), which occasioned his ejection from King's College; and his *Prophets and Kings* (1853), though it is less chargeable than the others with the author's usual fault, are likely to be more and more left at peace upon their shelves. Still less will the *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy* (1871–1872) stand the test of time.

In view of the testimony to Maurice's extraordinary powers, the disappointing nature of the product requires explanation. The wisest words ever written about him are those of Mill; and they are all the more remarkable because of the evident unwillingness with which Mill expresses an opinion in any way unfavourable to one whose character and intellect he admired so greatly. "Great powers of generalization, rare ingenuity and subtlety, and a wide perception of important and unobvious truths, served him not for putting something better into the place of the worthless heap of received opinions on the great subjects of thought, but for proving to his own mind that the Church of England had known everything from the first, and that all the truths on the ground of which the Church and orthodoxy have been attacked (many of which he saw as clearly as any one) are not only consistent with the Thirty-nine Articles, but are better understood and expressed in those Articles than by any one who rejects them. I have never been able to find any other explanation of this, than by attributing it to that timidity of conscience, combined with original sensitiveness of temperament, which has so often driven highly gifted men into Romanism from the need of a firmer support than they can find in the independent conclusions of their own judgment[1]."

Maurice, like many another, having put his hand to the plough, looked back. He built upon reason, but he feared to trust his foundation to the full. He thought he had learned from Coleridge what Carlyle contemptuously calls "the sublime secret of believing by 'the reason' what 'the understanding' had been

[1] Mill's *Autobiography*, 153–154.

obliged to fling out as incredible[1]." Hence that amazing torturing of the Thirty-nine Articles; hence that reconciliation of the Bible with science which Huxley failed to understand. Maurice was "German" enough to see that eighteenth century orthodoxy and eighteenth century scepticism were alike incomplete; but he was not "German" enough boldly to cut his cable and sail into any sea of thought whither his logic would carry him. He was still fast anchored to the Thirty-nine Articles; and his task was, not to discover truth, but to show that the truth had been already proclaimed. The well-meaning and in many ways admirable scheme known as Christian Socialism shows again how, in regard to fundamental principles, Maurice's mind was wrapped in fog. It was inspired by the heart-felt desire to help the poor, and it was productive of not a little good; but it was in no intelligible sense Socialism at all. It recognised the right of private property; it depreciated rather than exaggerated the power of the state to effect reform; it insisted upon the profoundly individualistic principle that the whole world could not do so much for the reformation of any man as the man himself. Confusion was common then, as it is now, with regard to Socialism; but for a leader there cannot be pleaded that excuse for confusion which may be urged in defence of his followers. Robert Owen and Pierre Leroux had already lived and taught; and to call by the name appropriated to their systems, principles so widely different as those of Maurice and Kingsley, was to court misunderstanding.

In some ways Frederick William Robertson (1816–1853) resembles Maurice. In literary form, and in the glow of his eloquence, he is superior; but, dying as he did at thirty-seven, the work he actually accomplished was necessarily much less considerable. The celebrated Brighton sermons, though not his only productions, are those by which he stands the best chance of being remembered. He resembles Maurice in the comprehensiveness of his Churchmanship; and in consequence of it, he, like Maurice, was regarded with distrust both by the Evangelicals and by the High Churchmen. He has also Maurice's tendency

[1] *Life of Sterling*, chap. viii.

to find new and strange meanings in old formulae; and there is an element of truth in the complaint brought against him by less original theologians, that he sometimes blurs the division between truth and error. Robertson did a service to thought in pointing out how impossible it is to maintain the hard alternatives in which the commonplace thinker delights, and in insisting that forms of expression, seemingly inconsistent, are often merely different ways of expressing the same truth. But perhaps he carried the process too far; on many minds, at least, his form of faith after a time produces an effect akin to that produced by scepticism. Men long for firm earth under their feet, for the certain knowledge that this is right and that wrong, this correct and that mistaken; and they distrust a system of reconciliations carried so far that it seems to leave nothing unreconciled.

From the point of view of philosophy, there is a distinct advance from Maurice to the younger group of Broad Churchmen who were so influential at Oxford about the middle of the nineteenth century. They too were influenced by "Germanism," but it filtered to them from different fountains. The bolder thought of Carlyle had by this time made men less timorous in touching the accursed thing; and Connop Thirlwall (1797–1875), one of the widest and profoundest scholars of the century, had done much to open the flood-gates. The greatness of Thirlwall's intellect and the extent of his influence are hardly yet recognised. In precocity he rivalled Mill himself, reading Latin at three and Greek at four; and, far from withering as precocious intellect often does, Thirlwall's grew with his growth. In his maturity, he far surpassed Mill in the extent of his knowledge. There were few languages of any importance which he had not studied. He was one of the Englishmen least removed from Carlyle in knowledge of German thought and literature. At a time when Arnold was learning German in order to read Niebuhr, Thirlwall was already profoundly versed in German theology, was making translations from the German, and then or very soon afterwards was preparing to translate Niebuhr himself. The translation of Schleiermacher's *Critical Essay on Luke* (1825), with his own introduction, was the first thing which marked his power. The

doubts as to Thirlwall's orthodoxy raised by this introduction were, according to the standard of orthodoxy of that day, not surprising; for it abandons the then accepted theory of verbal inspiration. But it interested Lord Melbourne, and induced him, after he had satisfied himself of the essential orthodoxy of the author, to recommend Thirlwall in 1840 for the bishopric of St David's. More than once Thirlwall as bishop showed the old spirit. He was the solitary occupant of the bench who refused to sign the address calling upon Colenso to resign, and he alone voted for the disestablishment of the Irish Church. On the other hand, it is somewhat surprising to recall that he was among those who took proceedings against *Essays and Reviews*.

To his acceptance of the bishopric must be ascribed Thirlwall's failure to redeem the promise of the introduction to Schleiermacher. He was hampered in two ways. His time was much taken up with official duties (he preached, for example, in the Welsh language, though it was whispered that the Welsh people hardly understood the sermons); and his position necessarily fettered his freedom of thought. Able as the episcopal charges are, they hardly show that daring which might have been expected of the man who in 1834 wrote in favour of the admission of Dissenters to degrees, and who resigned his office in Trinity College rather than compromise his independence. Perhaps the most interesting memorial of his later days is the collection of *Letters to a Young Friend*. They show that Thirlwall always retained the tastes of the scholar and the remarkable capacity for omnivorous reading which distinguished him at Cambridge; they are easy, frank and genial; and they reveal a most attractive side of a character outwardly somewhat hard and stern.

Kant distilled through the mind of Coleridge, Niebuhr and Schleiermacher rendered accessible by Thirlwall, Goethe and Schiller and Richter made familiar names by Carlyle,—these were sufficient to wield a mighty influence upon thought. The best men were not content to take them at second hand. From the middle of the century onwards, the line between the progressive and the unprogressive may almost be drawn where the knowledge of German ceases. There were exceptions. While Newman was

ignorant of German, Pusey knew it, and was at one time deeply interested in German theology. To his honour be it said, Pusey had a wide knowledge of the theology, and a considerable knowledge of the philosophy, at a date when very few in England knew anything about either. In later years, however, he looked with suspicion on all who had drunk of the polluted stream, and never referred to his own volumes on the causes of the rationalistic character of German theology. The leaders of the liberal party were undeterred by such suspicions, and unhesitatingly imperilled their worldly prospects by incurring them. In 1844 Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (1815–1881) and Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893) made a tour in Germany. They studied Kant and Hegel, and they met some of the most distinguished German scholars and philosophers then living.

In their knowledge of Hegel the two friends brought back to England the most powerful of all solvents of theological dogma. It was so just because it permitted, and indeed encouraged, the recognition of the truth which usually underlies even a false way of expressing human thought. It led the leaders themselves insensibly on to a goal the prospect of which would have frightened them at the start. Jowett at the close of his life rejected nearly all supernatural religion, at least in the forms in which it is commonly taught. We shall never return, he says, writing in 1886, "to the belief in facts which are disproved, *e.g.* miracles, the narratives of creation, of Mount Sinai[1]." And again, "We believe in a risen Christ, not risen, however, in the sense in which a drowning man is restored to life, nor even in the sense in which a ghost is supposed to walk the earth, nor in any sense which we can define or explain. We pray to God as a Person, a larger self; but there must always be a *sub-intelligitur* that He is not a Person. Our forms of worship, public and private, imply some interference with the course of nature. We know that the empire of law permeates all things[2]." Whether a man holding such views ought to have remained a clergyman of the Church of England is a question that may fairly be asked: it may be taken for certain that Jowett never would have been a clergyman

[1] *Life*, ii. 310. [2] *ibid.* 313.

if he had held such views at the beginning. But in his youth he was far less heterodox. Writing to Stanley in 1845, the year in which he took priests' orders, he says that he has "not any tendency to doubt about the miracles of the New Testament." Not only does he not disbelieve them; he has no tendency to doubt them. From this point he was insensibly led on to the disbelief in nearly everything that, to the majority, constitutes Christianity. To Jowett, however, the word Christianity still had a vital meaning, and in his own sense he was most sincerely Christian.

Ten years after the date of the letter to Stanley quoted above, Jowett published his first work, an edition of the epistles to the Thessalonians, Galatians and Romans, with notes and dissertations; which appeared on the same day with his friend's edition of the epistles to the Corinthians. In these ten years Jowett had doubtless advanced considerably beyond the position in which he stood in 1845; but he was still far from that to which he finally came. He "disbelieved in the story of Jonah and the whale"; but "he kept his judgment in suspense as to whether the Law had or had not been given from Sinai"; and "even when he felt most sceptical, his belief in immortality had never wavered[1]." His heresies therefore were likely to be mild in comparison with those to which he could have given utterance in later days. But yet it was no food for babes that his edition provided. The principles suggested in the essay *On the Imputation of the Sin of Adam* would consign to the rubbish-heap whole libraries of theology. But above all the essay on the atonement, wherein he powerfully denounced the absolute immorality of the doctrine as commonly received, roused a storm of vituperation, and sowed the seeds of difficulties which sprang up to beset for years the path of the author. On the other hand, the transparent honesty of the man, the literary finish of his work and the weight of his thought, won him a reputation which was not confined to England. His book was deemed important enough to require an answer, and a volume of sermons on *Christian Faith and the Atonement* was published,

[1] Tollemache's *Jowett*, 7.

among the contributors to which were the Bishop of Oxford (Wilberforce) and Pusey. One essay which had been partly prepared for Jowett's work had to be kept back because the author's health did not permit him to finish it. This circumstance gave rise to further trouble, for the paper in question was the *Essay on Interpretation* which was published in 1860 in the celebrated volume entitled *Essays and Reviews*. It is probable enough that had Jowett not had the paper already by him, he would have declined to contribute.

The stir caused by *Essays and Reviews* is still well remembered. Of the seven contributors only two, Rowland Williams and H. B. Wilson, were prosecuted. One of the charges against Wilson was that he denied the doctrine of eternal punishment. The Privy Council found that he had only expressed a "hope" that "a judgment of eternal misery may not be the purpose of God," and declined to visit with penal consequences the holding of such a hope. Pusey was alarmed. "In regard to that awful doctrine of the Eternity of Punishment," he wrote to Keble, "their Judgment is most demoralising in itself and in its grounds[1]." Evidently the scathing denunciation of the doctrine which Browning wrote a few years later in *The Inn Album* was not as needless as some critics have supposed. The defendants won their case, but all who were concerned suffered in public opinion. The essays, read at the present day, seem to many who are not anti-ecclesiastical mild and innocent; but while on that account they are unexciting, they are all the more valuable as a measure of progress. The mops to stay the tide are now wielded much farther up the shore. But in one respect at least the uproar produced the effects its authors intended. Jowett was turned aside from theology, which was his primary intellectual interest; the great translation of Plato became the work of his life; and, except within his College, he was for many years almost completely excluded from the pulpit.

Jowett's fellow-traveller, Stanley, though a far more voluminous author, had much less influence upon the development of thought. The two friends gave one another the warmest support; but, if we except their common liberalism, the differences between them

[1] *Life of Pusey*, iv. 48.

were more apparent than the resemblances. While Jowett was a philosopher, Stanley had an essentially historical mind. Lightfoot's criticisms of both were directed chiefly against the inaccuracies of Stanley; and when the latter brought the criticisms to the notice of Conington, his friend's advice was "to surrender at discretion." Stanley did so with perfect grace, and gave up the scheme which had been in his mind for further critical editions of the epistles, devoting himself rather to the writing of picturesque books of travel, combined with research, like his *Sinai and Palestine* (1856), and historical works, like his *Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church* (1861) and his *Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church* (1863–1865). These works won and deserved a wide popularity. They have the great merit of being emphatically readable; the English is always pleasant, and in the finest passages really eloquent. They have charm; but, brought to the test by comparison with histories truly great, they appear only second-rate. Stanley's picturesqueness is occasionally excessive, he plays too much on the surface of things, too seldom seeks to penetrate the depths.

With the two celebrated Oxonians there is usually joined a third, very different from either of them,—Mark Pattison (1813–1884), who was Rector of Lincoln College from 1861 till his death,—a man who, like Jowett, was at one point in his career disappointed of his legitimate ambition, but who, unlike Jowett, suffered himself to be embittered and partly spoilt by the disappointment. Pattison is rather a scholar and a critic than a theologian. His greatest work is his *Isaac Casaubon* (1875), a biography which exhibits a depth of learning in humanism such as no contemporary could equal. His monograph on *Milton* (1879) is perhaps the best of all the numberless books of the kind which have been produced during the last thirty years. His single considerable contribution to theology (or rather philosophy) was the paper in *Essays and Reviews* entitled *Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688–1750*, of which it is too little to say that it is the most memorable of all the papers contained in that volume. Like Pattison's other productions, it was quite the best thing on its subject in English. It was a dispassionate

inquiry into the subject of deism,—the causes which led to its rise, and afterwards to its decay; it made no pronouncement whatever upon dogma. There was in it, therefore, no real ground for offence; the clergy ought to have accepted it gratefully as a contribution to knowledge. They were left quite at liberty, if they only had the capacity, to use the material for the support of the Catholic faith. Partly, however, because the paper was found in bad company, partly, it may be suspected, because many of the readers had not intelligence enough to comprehend the writer's purpose, Pattison was involved in the suspicion which attached to the whole band. Doubtless this tended to silence him, and may be the cause of the deplorable fact that a man who did so superlatively well all that he attempted should, in a life of over seventy years, have accomplished so little.

North of the Tweed a similar work to that of Jowett was done, and from the philosophic side done more thoroughly, by John Caird (1820–1898). Caird, however, though only three years younger than Jowett, was much later before he wrote anything that appreciably influenced thought, and he has not that special importance which belongs to a pioneer. He first won fame as a preacher, and it may be doubted whether in his best days he had, as a pulpit orator, any equal in Great Britain. Stanley pronounced his *Religion in Common Life*, preached before the Queen and published by her command, to be "the greatest single sermon of the century." Caird won his reputation as a preacher at once, and to a man less strong and less imbued with the spirit of thoroughness it might easily have proved fatal. But he recognised the danger, and after ministering for two years to an Edinburgh congregation, he retired to the country parish of Errol in Perthshire. The eight years (1849–1857) which he spent there were his seed-time. Perceiving the importance of the German philosophy, he learnt the language in order to make acquaintance at first hand with the great thinkers. When, therefore, he emerged from his retirement, he had a knowledge of modern thought such as was by no means common either in Scotland or in England; and when in 1862 he became professor of divinity in Glasgow University, the doctrine which he taught was as alarming to the

more old-fashioned of his countrymen as it was inspiring to the younger generation. Apart from sermons, his publications all belong to the close of his life. The Croall lectures, which he delivered in 1878–1879, were the basis of his *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (1880), and his *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity* (1900) was the product of his tenure of the Gifford lectureship. He was the author also of a monograph on *Spinoza* (1888). Caird's teaching is mainly based on Hegel. It is inspired by the conviction that the old formulae are wholly inadequate —indeed it may be roundly said, untrue—to modern thought. The alternative is, therefore, either to find new principles, or to surrender to the materialists. Caird believed that Hegelianism supplied the new principles, and that the doctrine of development might be applied in such a way as to rejuvenate Christianity. His purpose was, of course, widely different from that of Newman in his *Development of Christian Doctrine*, and also from that of the recent Anglican school which has sought to buttress sacerdotalism by the aid of the great German. Caird gave no such twist to the philosopher's meaning; but whether he succeeded in bringing it into harmony with any interpretation of Christianity as a supernatural religion, is perhaps open to question.

The time of *Essays and Reviews* was one of unrest for theologians. That volume made its appearance when the excitement about the *Origin of Species* was at its height; and the second turmoil had not had time to settle when J. W. Colenso (1814–1883), Bishop of Natal, set a new stone of stumbling in the path. From the simplicity and definiteness of the arithmetical tests applied by Colenso, the effect of his critical examination of the Hexateuch (1862–1879) was at the time extraordinary. Kuenen pronounced it to be "simply annihilating[1]." The subsequent advance of knowledge and opinion has tended to obscure the merit of Colenso and to make many of his criticisms seem obvious. If his writings are no longer read, it is because they have reached what Huxley called the *euthanasia* of scientific work, and are built into the temple of thought. The judgment of Kuenen is sufficient proof that Colenso's examination was not idle, even to

[1] Quoted in Benn's *History of English Rationalism*, ii. 143.

the greatest scholars of the time; while the treatment meted out to him shows that it had stirred many who stood somewhat below Kuenen. Colenso was deposed from his see by the Bishop of Capetown; the Privy Council declared the deposition to be null and void; and the Bishop then excommunicated Colenso. His inhibition by the Bishop of Oxford (Wilberforce) from preaching at Carfax drew from Ruskin the question, "Is there a single statement of the Bishop of Natal's, respecting the Bible text, which the Bishop of Oxford dares to contradict before Professor Max Müller, or any other leading scholar of Europe[1]?" It ill becomes those who have entered upon the inheritance of freedom to depreciate the men who bore the burden and heat of the day, though their bodies may lie by the walls of forts long since carried and far in the rear.

> "Thoughts that great hearts once broke for, we
> Breathe cheaply in the common air."

The subject of the Broad Churchmen has led us far on towards the close of the period with which we have to deal. It is necessary to return to the beginning, and to trace another thread of causation. For while in a sense the Broad Churchmen were the heirs of the Noetics, they were related in a negative way to the Tractarians, reacting against the latter, just as the Tractarians reacted against the Noetics.

That great Catholic Reaction of which in Germany the conversion of Frederick Schlegel and in France the movements of Lamennais and Lacordaire were symptoms, took in England the characteristic form of an attempted compromise, to which we owe the theological road-making of Newman's *via media*. It is one of the many attempts to bring back that faith which the eighteenth century had disowned, and the absence of which Ruskin declared to be the great defect of the early nineteenth century.

Whether this particular attempt was wisely made or not remains to be seen. Having regard to the time and the circumstances, it is one of the strangest, and therefore one of the most interesting, of all the manifestations of the human mind. To the great mass

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter xlix.

of the rationalising thought of the time, it seemed no better than a conspiracy to put back the clock of thought by some centuries—a diligent search inspired by the extraordinary hope of discovering in the ages which the world has agreed to call dark, the light of heaven—the astonishing belief that in respect of the highest of all subjects it was the duty of modern man to sit humbly at the feet of those who, in nearly all other matters, were demonstrably inferior to the great intellects of Greece and Rome. Such was the aspect which the Oxford Movement wore to poets like Browning and Arnold, to theologians like Jowett, to philosophers like Spencer and Mill. Such, it seemed to them, was the extravagant demand made upon the heirs of Shakespeare and Bacon and Newton, of Kant and Hegel and Goethe.

There are two points of view from which the Oxford Movement may be regarded, and from which it may present, to the same mind, very different aspects. These are respectively the intellectual point of view and the aesthetic. Many who are wholly destitute of sympathy with the movement on its intellectual side—who would perhaps roundly declare its whole aim and method to be radically and irredeemably false—are by no means deficient in sympathy with it on the aesthetic side. As regards the intellectual foundation, they would argue that, supposing the purpose of the *Tracts for the Times* accomplished, supposing the language of the XXXIX Articles to be reconciled with Catholic truth as conceived by Newman,—still, the only effect would be to excite wonder at the eccentricity of the men who framed those articles and who used such language for such a purpose. At this point the task would only be beginning. They would proceed to ask how Catholic truth in this Newmanite sense was to be reconciled with truth *καθ' ὅλου* in its secular sense; and it is safe to say that they would receive no answer which would satisfy them. In Germany, Strauss's *Leben Jesu* was published; in France, Comte's *Cours de Philosophie positive* was issued, contemporaneously with the *Tracts for the Times*. The former subjects the life of Jesus to a thoroughly rationalistic examination; the latter calls the dogma of exclusive salvation a "fatal declaration," pronounces the dogma of the condemnation of mankind through Adam to be

"morally more revolting than the other," and traces to political necessity the dogma of the divinity of Christ. Even in the British Isles, and within the circle of believers, Thomas Chalmers, the only theologian who rivalled and in some ways surpassed Newman in greatness, was, as we have seen, in those very years conducting a religious movement on radically different principles from those of Tractarianism. How could the leaders of the Catholic Reaction appeal to such men? To their reason they could not appeal at all: possibly they might captivate their emotions.

Many who were only alienated intellectually by the Catholic Reaction have shown considerable sympathy with its aesthetic phase. Some of its manifestations appear to them paltry enough. With an amused glance Browning passes by the figure of the ritualist,

> "All Peter's chains about his waist, his back
> Brave with the needlework of Noodledom[1]";

and he leaves "thrilling views of the surplice question" to those who care to deal with them. But there are more important aspects. Nothing is plainer than that the Catholic Reaction was to a great extent an aesthetic movement. It is one form of the manifold protest against the hardness and bareness of the eighteenth century. The intellect had been fed, but not the emotions; the understanding, but not the imagination; the head was full, but the heart was empty. The dearth of lyrical poetry is significant, the character of that which was written is more significant still. Contrast the metallic brilliancy of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* or of Pope's *Ode on St Cecilia's Day* with the cloudy wizardry of the *Ancient Mariner*, the enchanting movement of *Kubla Khan*, or the languorous beauty of the *Ode to a Nightingale*; and put alongside of this the contrast between the bare sternness of Puritanism, or the cold decorum which often passed for religion after Puritanism had decayed, and the sensuous beauty of the Catholic worship. The highest beauty is spiritual, and the bare walls of a hideous chapel, or the desolate, mist-clad hill-side where the persecuted found their refuge, might be made

[1] *Bishop Blougram.*

grander than the interior of St Peter's. But lofty cathedrals aglow with the colours of painting, "storied windows," stately processions in gorgeous vestments and with swinging censers, and all the pomp and circumstance of a ceremonial religion, attract even such Puritanic minds as Milton's, and are almost the only attraction to the multitudes whose God must take a visible shape and be not too far removed above humanity. With this aspect of the Reaction, with the bringing back of colour and beauty into religious life, with the appeal to the imagination and the feelings, many who are only alienated by the arguments for it may well be in sympathy. No one who understands it can fail to be interested; for it is one of the best examples in history of the imperious demand of human nature that it shall be satisfied as a whole. They who reject the demand do so at their peril. The eighteenth century offered the feelings not bread, but a stone. One section of the nineteenth retaliates with the attempt to monopolise all the bread for feeling, and to put off intellect in its turn with mock nutriment. How will the reaction here again show itself? The answer has been partly given already, in tracing the Broad Church movement: it will be given more fully when we come to deal with the Oxford poets of doubt, Clough and Arnold.

The Oxford Movement was initiated in 1833, at least that is the date which Newman adopts as its starting-point. There had, however, been silent and to a great extent unconscious preparation for it ever since Newman, sixteen years before, had entered Oxford as an undergraduate. It reached a crisis in 1845, when Newman was received into the Romish communion; but it was not at an end, nor is it at an end now. The literary product of the movement is not great, except that which comes from the pen of John Henry Newman (1801–1890). We owe to it a little poetry, which will be noticed in its place. Its great prose document is Newman's fascinating *Apologia* (1864). There has grown up about the movement a whole prose literature; but most of the contents of this literature are, except as historical documents, what Charles Lamb calls *biblia-a-biblia*, books which are no books. They do not even rise to the level of "Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and, generally, all those

volumes which 'no gentleman's library should be without.'" Unless he specially wishes to investigate the Oxford Movement, any gentleman's library may quite well be without the great majority of the books which have been written about it. But it may not be without the *Apologia*: that is eminently and emphatically literature. Every reader must be grateful to Newman for the palpitating humanity which vivifies every line. It is the revelation of a great and a fiery soul, its fires covered and banked, it is true, by the sense of priestly duty, but breaking out now and then with scorching heat and blazing coruscations all the more effective for the previous suppression. Newman has often been described as saintly, but he is of the type of the older and greater saints, rather than of the later, as they are discriminated in J. R. Green's letters: "The devotees of the later hagiology could fast and weep and whimper, but they could not get into one of St Columba's grand wrath-explosions[1]." Newman could, and it is this fact which keeps him so human under all the weight of ecclesiasticism. Many years after he left Oxford he wrote to Isaac Williams that of all human things Oxford was perhaps nearest his heart; yet in his room at the Oratory there hung a view of Oxford, and over that dream of Church spire and College pinnacle he had inscribed from the vision of Ezekiel the words, "Son of Man, can these dry bones live?" Beneath was the answer, "O Lord God, thou knowest[2]." Intense passion vibrates in the words. The iron must have entered deep indeed before the man whose spirit has perhaps, of all during the last century, been most deeply penetrated, whose genius has been most irradiated by the influence of Oxford, could write thus.

Newman was the one great man, the one genius, of the Oxford Movement. Froude calls him the "indicating number," all the rest being but as ciphers; and the judgment is sound. Newman himself with characteristic modesty ascribes to Keble the initiation of the movement, and he "ever considered and kept the day" of Keble's assize sermon on National Apostasy as the start of what came to be known as Tractarianism. But the preparations for the movement had gone a long way before the sermon was preached.

[1] p. 75. [2] Prothero's *Life of Stanley*, ii. 340.

Hurrell Froude, who accompanied Newman on the famous journey in 1832–1833, writes with regard to their visit to Rome that they had got an introduction to Wiseman "to find out whether they [the Romish Church] could take us in on any terms to which we could twist our consciences[1]." The words are the words of Froude; but unless he has used the plural number unwarrantably they throw an unpleasant light on an early use of "economy" by Newman too; for the date is prior to the sermon on National Apostasy, prior to the *Tracts*, prior by years to any outward indication of a tendency on the part of Newman to secede to the Romish communion.

The exaggerated respect in which John Keble (1792–1866) was held was characteristic of the party, though some of it was doubtless due simply to the precocious learning of "the boy bachelor." When Newman went to Oxford there was already a kind of halo of sainthood about Keble's head, and it was the type of sainthood which is measured rather by the inches of aberration than by the diameter of the orbit. When Keble walked the streets it was with "eagerness" that the youth who knew him by sight pronounced his name, and with "awe" that he who was not so privileged—Newman himself—heard it. Even a Master of Arts—sublime being though he be—is "almost put out of countenance" by the gentleness, courtesy and unaffectedness of Keble. Alas! the trebly hundred triumphs. The conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils of Keble are indeed shrunk to little measure; and we can now pronounce his name without the least eagerness, and hear it without a particle of awe. He was a man of many attractive qualities, simple, kind, unassuming, almost the embodiment of that negative conception of goodness which lays greater stress upon sins avoided than upon great deeds done. It is true, Keble in his own parish did much good both by precept and by example; but there is nothing great either in his life or in his works. In prose, he is the author of a finely sympathetic *Life of Bishop Wilson* (1863) and of divers volumes of sermons which give expression, often beautifully, to the thoughts of a good, true and pious man. But there is nothing in them to rouse

[1] Ward's *Life of Wiseman*, i. 117.

or startle, little reach of thought, no evidence of originality. Keble was not the man to head a great movement, and if there had not been more virile spirits behind, the sermon on National Apostasy would soon have been forgotten. But there is a profound truth, noted by both Aristotle and Bacon in political affairs, which holds equally in the movements of religion. Γίγνονται μὲν οὖν αἱ στάσεις οὐ περὶ μικρῶν ἀλλ' ἐκ μικρῶν, στασιάζουσι δὲ περὶ μεγάλων[1], says Aristotle. "If there be fuel prepared," says Bacon, "it is hard to tell whence the spark shall come that shall set it on fire[2]." The spark is a trivial thing in itself; but the conflagration may be great. So it was in the case of the Oxford Movement: fuel had been gathering for years, and Keble chanced to light it.

The case of the two brothers Newman is interesting. From their common starting-point they diverged as wide as the poles; so that, while the elder brother surrendered his judgment to an infallible Church and then to an infallible Pope, we find the younger discussing the defective morality of the New Testament, and giving reasons why he cannot call himself a Christian. This wide divergence had its source in an innate difference of character. "I am more thankful on your account than on his," writes the mother to J. H. Newman on the younger brother winning a fellowship at Balliol. "He is a piece of adamant. You are such a sensitive being[3]." But the difference is also illustrative of the two great currents of thought of the century; the one brother hears and obeys the call of reason, the other takes shelter under authority.

It was in 1826 that the memorable friendship between Newman and Hurrell Froude began. Froude has left no writing worthy of his high reputation. He was the author of only two of the *Tracts for the Times*; the *Remains* (1838–1839), published after his death, are disappointing; and the few pieces from his pen in *Lyra Apostolica* do not suffice to lift him to the rank of the poets. Froude had bad health, and his mind seems to have been critical rather than creative. Though these two causes sufficed to check his productiveness, contemporaries bear emphatic testimony to

[1] *Politics*, viii. 4. 1. [2] Essay *Of Seditions and Troubles.*
[3] Newman's *Letters*, i. 134.

the greatness of his powers. Much as Newman admired Keble, he writes that in variety and perfection of gifts, he thinks Froude far exceeds even him[1]. Neither can the greatness of Froude's influence on the movement be doubted. It was a personal and impelling influence: he caused others to do what he himself could not, or at least did not do. Moreover, he was bold to the verge of rashness, and boldness was needed if the friends were to succeed. "If the times are troublous, Oxford will want hot-headed men, and such I mean to be, and I am in my place[2]," wrote Newman. Froude would have concurred.

The mainspring of the Oxford Movement was the dread of rationalism. The majority knew it only as it was exemplified in the Noetics; but they saw, some dimly, others with greater clearness, that the principles of the Noetics, logically carried out, led a long way. The history of the French Revolution showed how much authority had to fear from the application of such principles. A few, with wider knowledge, perceived that Germany was the home of a school of theology working upon those principles, a school of wider learning and of more boldly speculative spirit than that which was springing up in England. It was to counteract this German school and to warn religious minds against it that Hugh James Rose delivered and published his *Discourses on the State of the Protestant Religion in Germany* (1825), to which Pusey replied in a work already alluded to[3]. Pusey was as hostile as Rose to rationalism, and his quarrel with the latter was only on certain errors into which Rose had fallen, and certain misrepresentations of individual German theologians into which he had been led by imperfect knowledge of the subject.

It was not, however, along this line that the Oxford Movement was destined to advance; for Newman himself was ignorant of German. The problem for him was how to check the growth of rationalism as he saw it in England. He set to work as soon as he returned from his sojourn on the Continent; the *Arians of the Fourth Century*, at which he had been labouring before he left, was published within a few months of his return; and before the close of the year 1833 the first of the celebrated *Tracts for the*

[1] *Letters*, ii. 174. [2] *ibid.* i. 250. [3] *ante*, p. 105.

Times (1833–1841) appeared. Newman was, as is well known, the soul of the *Tracts*, writing twenty-nine of them, and more or less inspiring many of the rest. The notorious *Tract XC* was from his pen. The tone of the *Tracts* had been steadily becoming more and more Romish; not without reason, the suspicions of Protestants had been growing deeper and deeper; and *Tract XC* was a little more than they could bear. The story of the commotion it excited is so well known that it need not be retold. It drove Newman to Littlemore; the surprising thing is that it did not drive him farther; and we can only accept with astonishment, as another illustration of the mysterious working of the human mind, the statement that he regarded Littlemore as his Torres Vedras, whence, like Wellington, he was to advance once more and conquer. The younger Newman expresses a very natural surprise that it took his brother ten years to discover to what goal he was going. After the last of the *Tracts*, four years had still to elapse before he was received within the fold of the Romish Church.

Before the close of the Anglican period Newman had written, besides the works mentioned, *Lectures on Justification* (1838) and an *Essay on the Miracles recorded in the Ecclesiastical History of the Early Ages* (1843), as well as a large number of sermons. The *Essay on Miracles* drew from Macaulay the remark that "the times require a Middleton[1]." It is an attempt to secure for the miracles of the early Church the same credence which, until lately, Protestantism readily gave to those of the Scriptures. Just as the latter were becoming incredible the former were to be added,—not a mere straw, but a huge bundle, to an overburdened back. Nothing can more strikingly illustrate the hopelessness of the task in which Newman was engaged. "Our popular religion," writes Matthew Arnold, "at present conceives the birth, ministry and death of Christ, as altogether steeped in prodigy, brimful of miracle; *—and miracles do not happen*[2]."

The works of Newman after his secession are very numerous. His delightful purity of style is the charm of them all. But no man can surrender his freedom without danger to the intellect;

[1] Macvey Napier's *Correspondence*, 427.

[2] The italics are Arnold's.

and it may be doubted whether Newman ever produced anything quite worthy of the powers with which he was endowed,—except the *Apologia*, which illustrates how indignation bursts all bonds and makes eloquence as well as verse. The process of deterioration had begun long before the close of the Anglican period. Few great men have left letters more disappointing and barren than those of Newman during that period. They give the impression, not of a man, but of an ecclesiastical machine. There is no humour, little satire, hardly anything to recommend them except limpid English. The same impression is left by Newman's two disappointing tales, *Loss and Gain* (1848) and *Callista* (1856), both of which were intended to further the cause of Catholicism, and neither of which has any other value.

Next to the *Apologia*, the most remarkable of Newman's works is the *Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845). It well illustrates Newman's quickness in apprehending an advantage. Mr Benn[1] ascribes to the French Catholic reactionary Bonald the credit of introducing the idea of development into theology. Newman felt at once what an advantage it gave a Catholic in attacking the Protestant position. The Protestant—and the Tractarian—argument was that Rome had introduced innovations on primitive practice. Newman replies that in every living institution, as in every living being, there is a natural principle of growth, and that the changes which this growth brings are not to be regarded as corruptions or perversions; the final state is as natural as the primitive state; it is indeed that for which the primitive state existed. And this law of development supplied, to Newman's mind, a remarkable proof of the truth of Roman Catholicism. Properly understood, it showed that Rome was in the direct line of succession from primitive Christianity; not the same as that, but an outgrowth from it as natural and necessary as branch and twig and leaf are from the trunk. All Protestantism, on the contrary, including Anglicanism, was an aberration, a thing off the true line of development. Possibly Newman might have needed all his ingenuity to stop the argument just at the point when it would have become dangerous to his own position; but

[1] *English Rationalism in the XIX Century*, ii. 7.

at least it was not easy to meet him on the lines of orthodox Protestantism. The great idea for which he contended was the master-thought of the century; and the principle of Protestantism was that, in respect of religious truth, there was a point far in the past where development had ceased[1].

This was Newman's one great principle for the future. There is no further growth. The step which he took in 1845 sacrificed his freedom and could not but tend to belittle his mind. Stanley felt this. His interview with Newman in 1864 "left the impression, not of unhappiness or dissatisfaction, but of a totally wasted life, unable to read, glancing at questions which he could not handle, rejoicing in the caution of the Court of Rome, which had (like the Privy Council) kept open question after question that he enumerated as having been brought before it[2]." On such crumbs from the rich table of truth had that great intellect to feed,—always with a glance to this side and that lest he might find the crumb claimed by a mightier power, never certain when the open question might be pronounced to be open no longer. He was forced to bow his head in 1870 to the dogma of papal infallibility. Such is the price paid for the abnegation of intellectual duty. Newman says that his entry into the Romish Church was "like coming into port after a stormy sea." Doubtless it was. The sea was the sea of Truth, and the storms were the storms of doubt which inevitably sweep it for those who boldly spread their sails and steer towards the sunrise. Those storms could blow no longer in the still haven sheltered all round by the breakwaters of authority. But what a false idea of life,—what a pitiable conception of duty, as contrasted with the conceptions of the other great intellects of the time! "Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well," writes Arnold; and Emerson declares that every man has some time or other to choose between rest and truth. Newman chose the ignoble alternative. He seems never to have suspected—or, if he did,

[1] Huxley, who approached the doctrine of development without theological prepossessions, in the article on *Agnosticism and Christianity*, uses Newman's work to enforce his argument against both Newman himself and Newman's Protestant opponents.

[2] *Life of Stanley*, ii. 342.

he never dared to face the suspicion—that his own law of development, more widely and fearlessly applied, would have shown that the doubt he discarded was an evidence of progress, not of decay. He never felt the confidence expressed in Tennyson's well-known lines, and in Browning's noble *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, that it is the "finished and finite clod" which is "untroubled with a spark." Still less could he rise to the conception, embodied in one of the latter poet's latest pieces, *Rephan*, that evil itself, because of the struggle it evokes, is to be welcomed in preference to a "neutral best." Carlyle tells us that "Man's Unhappiness... comes of his Greatness; it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the Finite." Mill, in a passage eloquent with passion, declares that he will brave hell itself rather than be false to what is highest within himself, or assert to be true what that highest pronounces false. It was with such intellects that Newman was meant to stand; but he has pronounced his own doom, and, beautiful as is his English, he has left no legacy worthy to be treasured along with theirs. If ever there was a "lost leader," it was Newman. His place by right of intellect was with "the van and the freemen"; his choice of "rest" instead of "truth" condemned him to "sink to the rear and the slaves[1]."

The central principle of Newmanism is expressed in a sentence in the *Apologia*, which declares that there is "no medium, in true philosophy, between Atheism and Catholicity[2]." The *Grammar of Assent* (1870), a subtle and interesting but essentially sophistical book, was written principally to enforce this proposition. It was this belief, growing more and more fixed in his mind, which led Newman from Calvinism along the *via media* to Rome. Step after step, the ground sank beneath him, until at last he saw no refuge but the complete abandonment of himself to authority. If he ever thought of a reversal of the process, like Carlyle's bold defiance to the Everlasting No, he did not venture upon it. Strange if it never occurred to him that his pyramid was resting

[1] I do not mean to suggest that Newman was personally untruthful: I use the word "truth" in the sense in which Emerson, in the passage referred to above, contrasted it with "rest."

[2] *Apologia*, 198.

on its apex; for however safe a man may feel under the shelter of authority, he is logically bound to ask himself on what principle he selects the authority. There are many claimants for his allegiance. "There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet." Why not this refuge rather than the Catholic Church? Why not Buddhism, which presents so many analogies to the theology of Europe that the early Romish missionaries were driven to conjecture an intervention of the devil for the confusion of the faithful? Why not any other refuge? In spite of Newman's belittling of reason and repudiation of the right of private judgment, there must be an act of reason and an implicit assertion of that right in the first and most momentous step of all, the determination of the question, which of the claimants *is* the Infallible Authority? If so, why does the right cease at that point? The hardness of the alternative therefore vanishes; and authority itself is completely undermined if the person subject to it is to choose the sovereign.

Newman has been praised for the subtlety of his logic; and within certain limits he did possess a most subtle gift of reasoning. But before we praise it unreservedly, we should do well to note what are the limits within which this logical power is confined. It speedily appears that the use of it is, not so much to discover truth, as to support and buttress a foregone conclusion. Hence Kingsley's charge of dishonesty; hence the effect Newman produced upon the mind of Huxley, who writes: "After an hour or two of him I began to lose sight of the distinction between truth and falsehood[1]." Newman was not consciously or intentionally dishonest; but he used reason to maintain beliefs which had been reached without its aid. This is the secret of his constant use of arguments which must be described by the phrase "special pleading." The vital thing has taken place before; the arguments are altogether subordinate. Science has "little of a religious tendency; deductions have no power of persuasion. The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us,

[1] *Life of Huxley*, ii. 225.

voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion. A conclusion is but an opinion; it is not a thing which *is*, but which we are '*quite sure about*'; and it has often been observed, that we never say we are sure and certain without implying that we doubt. To say that a thing *must* be, is to admit that it *may not* be. No one, I say, will die for his own calculations: he dies for realities. This is why a literary religion is so little to be depended upon; it looks well in fair weather; but its doctrines are opinions, and, when called to suffer for them, it slips them between its folios, or burns them at its hearth[1]."

This passage, written in 1841, and emphasised by the author's quoting it from himself in 1870, is very significant. Few would deny that much of it is true, and the truth is admirably expressed. "Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us." Such things are not susceptible of demonstration, yet we feel their profound reality. It would be absurd to apply logical formulae to voices and looks, and often even to persons and deeds; yet these are the sort of realities for which men die. Everything, however, depends upon the application. What are the "dogmas" and the "mysteries" for which it is worth living and dying, the "realities" which are so far superior to the things we are "*quite sure about*" as to need no proof? Many have felt a shock on discovering that central among them is the Athanasian Creed. This "is not a mere collection of notions, however momentous. It is a psalm or hymn of praise, of confession, and of profound, self-prostrating homage, parallel to the canticles of the elect in the Apocalypse. It appeals to the imagination quite as much as to the intellect. It is the war-song of faith, with which we warn first ourselves, then each other, and then all those who are within its hearing, and the hearing of the Truth, who our God is, and how we must worship Him, and how vast our responsibility will be, if we know what to believe, and yet believe it not....For myself, I have ever felt it as the most simple and sublime, the most devotional formulary to which Christianity has given birth, more so even than the *Veni Creator* and the *Te Deum*[2]."

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, 92–93. [2] *ibid.* 133.

After this amazing declaration it is difficult to proceed. Surely the force of self-persuasion can go no farther; surely he who could speak thus had gone into a region of thought or feeling where words had lost their common meaning. It might reasonably be pleaded that to measure the *Te Deum* with logical compass and square would be as misleading as would be the same process if it were applied to Shakespeare's "We are such stuff as dreams are made on." But the Athanasian Creed is cast in as hard, precise, logical terms, as are the propositions of Euclid. It purposely seeks to constrain the reason; and Newman has given no good ground for refraining to test it by the reason.

This is, unfortunately, typical. First an illustration which commands assent—then a dexterous twist in the process of thought—then under shelter of the illustration something is brought in which is wholly alien from it. This is why so many have felt that Newman is not so much a logician as a sophist. His mind is made up from the start, and his logic is not that of a seeker for truth. Hence, he is sometimes contented with reasoning which, to such an intellect as his, ought to have been contemptible. Occasionally, those who had been fascinated into discipleship by the attractiveness of his personality, the plausibility of his argument and the charm of his style, won their deliverance so. J. A. Froude owed his to a sophism of Newman's about the word *motion*. "Scripture," said Newman, in a sermon, "says the earth is stationary and the sun moves; science, that the sun is stationary and the earth moves, and we shall never know which is true until we know what *motion* is." Froude argued that if Scripture did not mean by "motion" what all men intend to convey by the word, he could never be sure what it did mean; and he turned his back upon Newmanism[1].

Sophistry of this kind, however, is by no means confined to Newman, or to Newman's party. When Mansel roused the indignation of Mill by arguing that the "justice" of God may be something different—not higher or purer, but wholly different in quality—from the "justice" of man, he was using exactly the same sophism; and all the numerous tribe of the reconcilers of

[1] *Nemesis of Faith.*

Genesis with science use it too when they put upon the words of Genesis a non-natural meaning. It is seldom just to accuse them of dishonesty or conscious disingenuousness; they feel that they must defend what has been imparted to them as vital truth, and they do it with the best weapons they can find.

In Newman's case the sophistry is the more frequent, because it was by imagination, not by reason, that he reached what he believed to be the truth. In him, the use of reason is always subordinate. He long concealed the fact from his readers and hearers, and partly from himself; because he must always clothe his imaginings in the garb of reason. In more ways than this he had great powers of self-deception. He was impulsive, and yet he made himself believe that he was cautious and deliberate. The long delay before he joined the Romish communion was really a sort of veil hung before his own eyes. Any dispassionate observer could see from a very early date what the result must inevitably be.

While in other respects Newman must be sorrowfully pronounced a doubtful steward of the great talents committed to him, in one point he deserves unqualified praise. No English of the nineteenth century surpasses Newman's exquisite prose. Some other writers may have equalled (though very rarely) his highest flights; but probably no other has continuously, from first to last, written prose so pure, so flawless. Among contemporaries, he who comes nearest to him is Froude; among writers of the eighteenth century, Goldsmith. There is all the scholar's severity in his choice of words and in the concision of his sentences; nothing loud, nothing exaggerated, nothing importunate. Those who listened to his conversation were impressed with the sense of a force kept under severe restraint; and this impression is conveyed also by his writings. One observer's description of the man might stand almost equally well for a description of the style: "Nothing more characterised Newman than his unconscious refinement. It would have been impossible for him to tolerate coarse society, or coarse books, or manners seriously deficient in self-respect and respect for others. There was also in him a tenderness marked by a smile of magical sweetness, but a sweetness that had in it

nothing of softness. On the contrary, there was a decided severity in his face, that severity which enables a man alike to exact from others, and himself to render, whatever painful service or sacrifice justice may claim....The saying, 'Out of the strong came forth sweetness,' was realised in Newman more than in anyone else whom I have known[1]." Refinement—severity—strength—sweetness,—all of these words are truly descriptive of the style as well as of the character of Newman. One more characteristic deserves specially emphatic notice,—its extraordinary range. In this respect Newman surpasses both Goldsmith and Froude. In general, his English flows on with such limpid simplicity that its excellence escapes attention; but the finest distinction, the most elusive subtlety, easily finds expression. Cold sarcasm, biting irony and glowing passion are also within its scope. The note sinks and rises apparently without effort; for Newman's art is perfectly concealed.

An obvious distinction among the minor Tractarians (and, compared with Newman, all the rest are minor) is that which separates those who, like Newman, went over to the Romish Church, from those who remained in the Anglican communion. Among the former were F. W. Faber (1814–1863), best known as a writer of religious verse, which is meritorious but by no means great, and Frederick Oakeley, one of the historians of Tractarianism, who tells us that, whatever the Tractarians might be on the English side of the Channel, "there could be no doubt of their perfect Catholicity on the other," and that they "used to distinguish themselves by making extraordinarily low bows to priests, and genuflecting, even in public places, to every one who looked in the least like a Bishop[2]." To the same class belong W. G. Ward (1812–1882), and H. E. Manning (1808–1892). Perhaps before any of these notice ought to be taken of Nicholas Patrick Wiseman (1802–1865), who, though not a Tractarian, was, as the most distinguished English-speaking Roman Catholic, the natural centre towards which the more advanced Tractarians gravitated. Wiseman will always retain a place in

[1] Aubrey de Vere's *Recollections*, 278–279.

[2] *Historical Notes on the Tractarian Movement*, 73.

literature, if it were only for the fact that he was the original from which Browning drew Bishop Blougram; and, according to Father Prout, Wiseman himself reviewed the volume in the Romanist journal, *The Rambler*. He did it in the most good-natured fashion, praising the "fertility of illustration and felicity of argument" of *Blougram*. Though much of the matter of the poems, says the reviewer, "is extremely offensive to Catholics, yet beneath the surface there is an under-current of thought that is by no means inconsistent with our religion; and if Mr Browning is a man of will and action, and not a mere dreamer and talker, we should never feel surprise at his conversion[1]." Wiseman was wrong, but the thought was suggested by the perception of a tone of feeling which is really present in Browning.

Wiseman perhaps took from Newman's *Loss and Gain* the idea that the novel might be used as a vehicle for disseminating Catholic truth; and with this purpose in view he wrote *Fabiola* (1854), a tale of the Church of the Catacombs. It won immense success, and was soon translated into all the principal and not a few of the less important European languages. By this book Wiseman is far more widely known than by his *Connection between Science and Revealed Religion* (1836), or by any of his theological or controversial writings. But he was not a great writer. His style was impure and verbose; for he had spent so much of his time abroad that he had got out of touch with the English language as well as with English life. According to Monckton Milnes[2], he was described by a German translator of his *Horæ Syriacæ* as a "from-an-Irish-family-descended-in-Spain-born-in-England-educated-in-Italy-consecrated-Syrian-Scholar"; and that remarkable polysyllabic creation not inaptly indicates the proportion of England in him.

Wiseman is credited by Newman with a perception of what was coming when, in 1835, he lectured in London on *The Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church*; and Newman adds that he "created an impression through the country, shared in by ourselves, that we had for our opponents

[1] Quoted in Furnivall's *Bibliography of Browning*, 54.

[2] *Monographs*, quoted in the *Library of Literary Criticism*.

in controversy, not only our brethren, but our hereditary foes[1]." Wiseman's was at this time a name known throughout the Catholic world; the names of the Oxford band were only beginning to be known outside Oxford itself. In the University, the reputation of W. G. Ward was second only to Newman's. A brilliant talker, a daring controversialist, scornful of compromise, he fixed attention upon himself; and he held it by his intellect. In after years he was one of the most extreme advocates of the ultramontane doctrine of infallibility. Anti-rationalist as he was, he might almost from one point of view be regarded as the "reasoning machine" which the Utilitarians were said to be. "He used," says Church, "to divide his friends, and thinking people in general, into those who had facts and did not know what to do with them, and those who had in perfection the logical faculties, but wanted the facts to reason upon[2]." Church adds that Ward belonged to the latter class. He afterwards used these faculties to good purpose in the *Essays on the Philosophy of Theism* (collected in 1884), in which he crossed swords with Mill. But the book by which he is best known is his *Ideal of a Christian Church* (1844), which led to his degradation from the degrees of B.A. and M.A. The book is a sort of gospel of Tractarianism in its utmost development; but though it had great influence at the time, as a piece of literature it is poor. If Ward's friend Newman was almost the best of English stylists, Ward himself was not very far removed from the worst. The words of Jenkyns, the Master of Balliol, were critically accurate: "Well, Ward, your book is like yourself, fat, awkward, and ungainly[3]."

Though Manning has been named as one of those Tractarians who passed over to Rome, it is not strictly correct to call him a Tractarian; not correct, at least, if we mean by that either a contributor to *Tracts for the Times*, or a man closely associated with the contributors. Manning did not know Ward till after the latter's degradation in 1845; he condemned *Tract XC* as being casuistical; and it was not till he had travelled on the Continent

[1] *Apologia*, 64. [2] Church's *Oxford Movement*, 207.
[3] *W. G. Ward and the Oxford Movement.*

in 1847–1848 that he began to doubt whether the position of the High Church Anglicans could be maintained. He was troubled, because he found it always difficult and sometimes impossible to make foreigners understand why men holding such views should not be Roman Catholics. The Gorham controversy, turning as it did upon the question of baptismal regeneration, in which Manning had always shown a special interest, further weakened his shaken faith; and in 1851 he followed Newman into the Romish Church.

Manning, who was, after Newman, the greatest of those who went over to Rome, presents a strong contrast to the latter; and it is notorious that there was little love lost between the two Cardinals. Newman was the typical student and scholar, almost the recluse,—"nunquam minus solus quam cum solus," as Copleston finely said of him. Manning was essentially the man of affairs. His delight was in practical and administrative work. He played an important part in the Œcumenical Council of 1870, the history of which he has told in the *True Story of the Vatican Council* (1877); and he threw himself zealously into such social questions as the great London dock strike of 1889. He had not the ambition, and probably he had not the power, to excel in literature.

Along with the other class—the class of those who remained content with the *via media* although its great engineer himself deserted it—may, for the sake of convenience, be included one or two who, though more or less in sympathy with the fundamental ideas, could not be described as members of the Tractarian party. One of these was Walter Farquhar Hook (1798–1875), who became Dean of Chichester. Hook was one of the pioneers of "High" views; but he shrank from extremes, and though from his vicarage of Leeds he looked upon the *Tracts* with sympathetic interest, their later developments thoroughly frightened him. There is a comic element in a correspondence between him and Pusey,—Hook, on the eve of Newman's secession, suggesting to Pusey that "We ought to put forward the Protestant view of our Church in the strongest way[1]." It was a time of rapid movement, and

[1] *Life of Pusey*, ii. 488.

he who had been yesterday in the van was in danger of finding himself to-morrow a mere unnoticed fragment of the main body.

Hook's only book of note is the bulky *Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury* (1860–1876), which carries the narrative down to Archbishop Juxon. It is not a great work. The plan promised neither the advantages of great history nor of good biography. For the highest kind of biography, personal acquaintance with the subject of the biography is indispensable; and great history demands a kind of unity. On one condition only could the *Lives of the Archbishops* have been raised into a great history of the Church in England. That condition was that all the Archbishops must have been really as well as officially the heads and centres of Church life in their time. In point of fact, they were not. Some of the Archbishops of Canterbury were great men; others were mediocrities. The interest, therefore, of Hook's work is intermittent; it is a collection of fragments. The same inherent vice of plan mars Lord Campbell's *Lives of the Lord Chancellors* (1845–1869), which afforded a precedent to Hook.

Samuel Wilberforce (1805–1873), the celebrated Bishop of Oxford, stood at a greater distance from the movement than Hook, and, though sympathetic, was from the first cautious and reserved in his attitude towards it. His High Churchmanship was derived, not from the Tractarians, but rather from the older Anglican tradition. The Clapham associations of his birth and early life tended to moderation; and the strongly practical and statesmanlike cast of his mind made him suspicious of speculative conclusions when they threatened to create practical difficulties. Long before *Tract XC*, therefore, he began to show his disapprobation of much of the work that the Tractarians were doing. *Tract LXVII* in particular, dealing with sin after baptism, incurred his disapproval. Half of his University Sermons (1839) were in effect an examination of its doctrine; and he wrote to his brother Robert in strong terms about the defence afterwards issued by Pusey, the author of the tract, denouncing part of the argument as "special pleading and quibbling, of which I could not have believed Pusey capable[1]."

[1] Ashwell's *Life of Wilberforce*, i. 153.

It was as an administrator, as a preacher and orator, and as a brilliant conversationist, that Wilberforce most impressed men. In the unanimous opinion of his contemporaries, very few equalled and scarcely any surpassed him in these respects. So deep is the mark he has left by his practical work that he has been called "the remodeller of the episcopate"; and there remain sufficient relics of his ready and witty conversation to prove that he only needed a Boswell to be assured of a rank among talkers second only, in his generation, to that of Carlyle. His published sermons scarcely sustain his reputation. They, and especially those preached after he became bishop, were the productions of an extremely busy man who was often forced to rely upon his readiness to supply the lack of preparation. Nevertheless, his position even in literature is a respectable one. The *Life of William Wilberforce* (1838), which he wrote in conjunction with his brother, is a bright and readable biography. He was one of the most successful of the ecclesiastical story-writers, and his allegorical tale, *Agathos* (1839), as well as its successor, *Rocky Island* (1840), won a very wide popularity. He was, however, most conspicuous as a writer of articles in the *Quarterly Review* on topics of controversy. These were collected and republished in 1874; but they are not among the small number of such collections which have become a permanent possession of literature. Wilberforce was too often on the side which was popular in clerical circles at the time, and which has not won the suffrage of later years. He was the author of a celebrated review of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, to which reference is made elsewhere; and in an article on *Essays and Reviews* he championed another "lost cause."

Of the actual contributors to *Tracts for the Times*, the only ones calling for notice, besides Newman and Keble and Hurrell Froude, were Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800–1882) and Isaac Williams, of whom the last has won a reputation, such as it is, chiefly in poetry. Pusey was the chief man of the section of the Tractarians who remained in the English, as decidedly as Newman was the chief of those who seceded to the Romish Church. He was a man of profound learning, which was by no means confined, as the learning of theologians in that age too fre-

quently was, to professional and quasi-professional subjects. His familiarity with the German language and with German philosophy has been already mentioned. In his hands was the key which to so many others of that time opened the door of intellectual salvation, and showed a way as remote from the bare negation of the spiritual, on the one hand, as it was from Catholicism on the other. The reason why the result in Pusey's case was so different is probably to be found in a certain confusion of mind lying behind all his learning, certainly unremoved by it, possibly increased by its very greatness. George Eliot's caustic description of Casaubon contains a truth which may be generalised, —a truth vigorously expressed in the great Duke of Wellington's regret that a certain peer's education had been "so far too much for his abilities." Casaubon was too highly educated for his intellect; he had accumulated knowledge until he had lost the power to use it, or even to understand it. He could not see the wood for the trees. Even so it was with Pusey, to whom above all men of the nineteenth century the moral of Casaubon is applicable. His books are, in a literary sense, contemptible, the style crude, ungainly and confused. His judgment was far inferior to his knowledge. He had no penetration; he seemed to be on the verge of the discovery of great truths; he might even be said to have them in his hand; and he never suspected the fact. "He never knew when he burned[1]," said Newman of him, alluding to the children's game in which the blindfolded searcher is guided by the words, "warm," "hot," "you burn." To this obtuseness, if it may be called so without offence, was added another cause, an obstinate prepossession in favour of authority. He objected to the German theologians that their theories "pull to pieces what has been received for thousands of years," as if the antiquity of a belief were a sufficient ground for accepting it. Under the influence of this obstinate prepossession, the mind of Pusey was hermetically sealed against German philosophy. He knew it, and yet he knew it not. Where it began to diverge from the things which had been received for thousands of years, there he ceased to regard it as possibly true. Hence it came that,

[1] A. de Vere's *Recollections*, 277.

notwithstanding all his learning, Pusey was all his life a drag upon the wheel of progress. He was always to be found among the reactionaries, his language was often violent, and sometimes he stooped to actions which many of his friends would wish to be forgotten. He was one of those who opposed the proper endowment of the chair of Greek at Oxford, because the holder of the chair was Jowett, with whose opinions Pusey was, of course, in bitter antagonism; and he denounced in no measured terms the appointment of Temple to the bishopric of Exeter, declaring it to be "the most frightful enormity that has ever been perpetrated by a Prime Minister[1]," and severing himself from Gladstone, who was the minister responsible for this "enormity."

There is distinctly traceable in Pusey's work a gradual deterioration. His *Historical Enquiry into the Causes of the Rationalist Character of German Theology* (1828–1830) is fair-minded as well as learned; and it brought upon Pusey an amount of abuse for heterodoxy which ought to have taught him sympathy with others. Ten years later, as we have seen, a man so well disposed to High Church principles as Wilberforce denounces his "special pleading and quibbling"; and six years later still, while he believes Pusey to be "a very holy man," he thinks "his last letter about Newman ...deeply painful, utterly sophistical and false[2]." The later relations between Wilberforce and Pusey were not always very friendly, and there may be some exaggeration in this language; but the impartial critic will discern a diminution of candour in the progress from the work on German rationalism to the tract on Sin after Baptism, the teaching on the Eucharist and on Penitence, and the critical principles (or the absence of them) in such writings as the Commentary on Daniel. The Nemesis of an essentially sophistical position overtook Pusey, as it overtook Newman. It is not easy to reconcile the refusal "to renounce any doctrine *formally* decreed by the Roman Church[3]," with the candid acceptance of Articles which declare a certain Romish doctrine to be "a fond thing vainly invented," and which further, without any hint of a distinction between theory and practice, declare

[1] *Life of Stanley*, ii. 371. [2] *Life of Wilberforce*, i. 311.
[3] *Life of Pusey*, iii. 43.

certain other parts of the system to be "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits." No mind can go on arguing that "Black's not so black,—nor white so *very* white," without suffering for it. The boundary-line between truth and falsehood becomes blurred: Pusey was personally quite honest in intention; but long habit of making the worse appear the better reason, acting upon an intellect inherently disinclined to probe questions to the bottom, rendered him a most unsafe guide.

Among lesser figures, the two brothers Mozley deserve notice. The elder, Thomas (1806–1893), is most likely to be remembered as the author of one of the most spirited and readable accounts of the Oxford Movement, the *Reminiscences of Oriel* (1882). Bright and pleasantly written as is Mozley's book, valuable as it is in substance, because it gives an account of the movement from the inside, and yet from another standpoint than Newman's, it has not the perennial charm of that great spiritual autobiography, the *Apologia*; and nothing else left by its author rivals it in interest. The younger brother, James Bowling Mozley (1813–1878), less brilliant, but more profound, did work more solid, though less likely to be remembered. He was among those who as time went on became alienated from the extreme doctrines of the Tractarians. He accepted the Gorham judgment with satisfaction, and traversed the position of the Ritualists as to baptism in three publications, *The Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination* (1855), *The Primitive Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration* (1856), and *A Review of the Baptismal Controversy* (1862). His best-known work, however, is the volume of the Bampton Lectures *On Miracles* (1865), in which he sets himself to prove the credibility of miracles, but unfortunately leaves almost untouched that which was more and more becoming the question of the men of science when they thought of the theme at all,—viz., Are they proved? He thus leaves unimpugned the criticisms of such a man as Huxley, who abandons altogether the *a priori* argument against miracles, and proceeds to examine the evidence for and against any alleged miracle.

Last among the personal disciples of Newman may be mentioned Richard William Church (1815–1889); and he, the

youngest of the band, is also the one least distant from Newman in excellence as a writer, and in charm as a man. His volume, *The Oxford Movement*, published posthumously in 1891, is the best succinct account which we possess,—better as a history than even the *Apologia*; for while the latter simply professes to trace the development of Newman's own mind, Church's book is singularly impersonal. It has been remarked that he is perhaps the only writer who has ever written a history of events in which he played a prominent part, and yet never mentioned his own name. Certainly Church showed modesty, and he had in a high degree the power of self-effacement. But perhaps this, which was said in his praise, was really his chief defect. After all, the business of a historian is to tell the truth; and it is hard to see how that can be satisfactorily done without giving to every actor his due prominence. Probably we should do well to go back sometimes from the Christian, or at least the popular, conception of humility, to the Aristotelian conception of highmindedness. There could be no greater contrast than that which exists, on this point, between Church's book and an incomparably greater book, Knox's *History of the Reformation*. And yet the egotism of the latter is one of its greatest charms, and perhaps not the least element in its value.

Of all the men of the Tractarian party, Church was the most Catholic, in a sense which they rarely gave to the word. He is remarkably comprehensive, large and generous in his judgment of men and things outside the range of his special sympathies. This characteristic is seen in his references to contemporaries, where it is most difficult to show such a virtue. An opponent is sure to have fair treatment at the hands of Church; there is no shibboleth to be pronounced in order to win his sympathy. In this respect he differs from the majority even of the best men on both sides of the heated controversy in which he took part, and his only rival in generosity of judgment is Stanley. This is the secret of the excellence of his literary monographs. Whoever may be his subject—*St Anselm* (1870), *Dante* (1879), *Spenser* (1879) or *Bacon* (1884),—what Church has to say is worthy of the most careful attention. The very choice of these men indicates catholicity of taste; the sympathetic treatment of them all demon-

strates it. The severe Dante, the rich and sensuous Spenser, the saintly Anselm, the not too saintly Bacon, all receive equal justice at his hands. Yet he is not guilty of indiscriminate laudation. In his judgment of Bacon, for example, he is as far removed from the hero-worship of Spedding as he is from the excessive severity of Macaulay.

It has sometimes been said that the secession of Newman stopped the Oxford Movement; but the statement requires explanation and limitation. The secession was a blow to the movement in Oxford itself, but its progress in the country at large was not stopped. On the contrary, the progress was probably greater and more rapid after, than before 1845. Doctrines of confession and absolution, of the "sacrifice" of the Eucharist, and all the rest of the sacerdotal system, have gone on propagating themselves rapidly, and they are far more widespread now than they were sixty years ago. But it is true that in Oxford itself the effect of the secession was like that of an earthquake: men were stunned; they hardly knew whether they were injured or uninjured, alive or dead. As they recovered their senses, each had to bethink himself of the ground on which he stood. A few followed Newman; more were driven backwards to the position of the moderate High Church; yet others became bolder in rationalism than their predecessors had ventured to be. Only a very few, like Pusey, were hardly influenced in their opinions at all. But the seed which had been sown, whether for good or for evil, was still in the ground; and in due season it bore fruit again,—a fruit of somewhat different flavour from that of the Newmanite school. It must suffice to take one example, that of Henry Parry Liddon (1829–1890).

Mark Pattison, in his *Memoirs*, remarks on the decline in the interest in knowledge in Oxford after the rise of Tractarianism. This remark seems, at first sight, to be contradicted by the facts. Tractarianism led to a great outburst of speculation, to a ransacking of the Fathers, to an investigation of the early history of the Church, such as had been undreamed of by the old school of contented orthodoxy. It was primarily a critical movement. But, in the first place, the criticism was like a boxing-match with gloves

on. It was never pushed home. So long as its results tended to support "catholic" doctrine, they were accepted; when they threatened it, the criticism was stopped. Pusey did not answer German rationalism: he simply pointed out that the ground was forbidden ground, that the business of criticism was to agree with, and by no means to dissent from, "what has been received for thousands of years." Any real pursuit of knowledge under such conditions is impossible. Science is a jealous mistress; she will admit no rival; her votary must swear

> "To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought."

No such vow was possible to the Tractarians; and therefore, though the seed sown was Knowledge, the crop reaped was Ignorance.

It may seem shocking to name, as an illustration of this warfare against knowledge, a man of such attractive personality, of so great gifts and so great attainments, as Liddon; and yet that is just the lesson of his life and work. He was the most eloquent English preacher of his day, and for twenty years he made the pulpit of St Paul's a force to be reckoned with. Whenever there was need, his powerful voice was raised for justice and for mercy. His mind was highly cultivated; his knowledge, in his own field, was extensive. But it is just because he was the consummate flower of his party, that he best illustrates the inherent antipathy between Tractarianism and science, in the widest sense of the word. Liddon seems to have had no searchings of heart, no hesitation as to what he should believe or not believe. He at once became a follower of Pusey, and he remained a follower all his life. The point of interest about him is that his mind seems, properly, to have no history at all. Pusey, as we have seen, shrinks back from the comparative liberalism of his youth; Newman finds that there is no room for him within the bounds of Anglicanism; Mark Pattison recoils from the verge of the gulf which swallowed Newman, and becomes a thoroughgoing liberal. Liddon passes through no such process. A development of thought which is almost unparalleled takes place in his day; but it moves him not at all. The whole criticism of the Bible, from the points

of view of geology, of astronomy and of biology, leaves him unaffected. He is indifferent to what is called the "higher criticism." German idealism rises and flourishes in Oxford; and his only feeling for it is a feeling of dislike. He does not take the trouble to understand it.

This singular passivity is all the more remarkable because it is not at all characteristic of the men of the High Church party still younger than Liddon. In the career of the great preacher there is nothing more instructive than his attitude to *Lux Mundi*. He loathed the doctrine of inspiration there taught, because he felt it to be a manifestation of a new critical movement. In it, the German philosophy, which Liddon had learned from Pusey to dread and to hate, is translated into terms of theology,—much as Bottom was "translated"; it is reconciled with High Churchism as successfully as Genesis has been reconciled with science. Liddon's instinct was to leave things alone. Many labour to introduce new ideas; he rather strove to avoid them. He was from first to last opposed to putting the new wine of modern thought into the old bottles of the creeds and formulæ of the Church. And from his own point of view, as an Anglo-Catholic, who shall say that he was wrong? Perhaps the process which he set his face against may lead to strange results.

This feature of Liddon's work renders his writings disappointing. In them, there is no thought in the making. The popularity of the Bampton Lectures on the *Divinity of Jesus* (1867) was due, in the first place to their eloquence, and in the second place to the very fact that they were destitute of originality. His inordinately long *Life of Pusey* (1893–1894) shows that he could not condense; and this fault is not redeemed in the book, as it was in the author's sermons, by charm of voice and manner.

No other recent theologians have produced anything like as great an effect upon general life, and consequently upon literature, as the men of the Oxford Movement; but, though their work merely touches the skirts of literature, the great Cambridge trio, Westcott, Lightfoot and Hort[1], cannot be passed over in silence.

[1] Brooke Foss Westcott (1825–1901); Joseph Barber Lightfoot (1828–1889); Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828–1892).

In scholarship they were the profoundest of their time in England, and they almost alone were fit to measure swords with the critics of Germany, the greatest of whom spoke of them with respect. They were remarkable not only in themselves, but in their alliance. Two of them, Westcott and Lightfoot, were pupils of the same school,—King Edward's, Birmingham,—all three were members and became Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge; from 1872 to 1879 they were all teaching together at Cambridge; and for the last year of that period they were all professors of divinity there. The intimacy of the alliance was lessened, though the friendship was in no way impaired, when Lightfoot in 1889 accepted the bishopric of Durham. This close intercourse of minds essentially in harmony was beneficial to all; and especially to Westcott and Hort, whose joint work in the critical revision of the text of the New Testament, originally undertaken when they were resident apart, was much promoted by the intimacy of their intercourse at Cambridge. It was in this department probably that the work of the three friends was most valuable. They were not highly gifted for philosophical speculation, nor were they great on the literary side. Westcott at least had singular difficulty in expressing himself clearly; and the value of his judgment in things literary may be gauged by his extraordinary pronouncement that "a verse of Keble is worth volumes of Tennyson." But all had in a remarkable degree the temperament of the scholar. The work which they did was perhaps that which most demanded to be done. Both on the side of orthodoxy and on that of scepticism, there had been abundance of speculation: it was time to take account of what was accurately known, or could be discovered, with regard to the subjects in dispute. For this end, no one did more than the three Cambridge men; but for that very reason their work is in the main highly technical and hardly belongs to literature.

CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHY

UNDER the conditions which prevail in England, philosophy is less subject to preconceptions than theology. Whatever may be the value, or even the imperative necessity of creeds, their very existence must to some extent hamper freedom of thought: where, as in England, the accredited teachers of the subject in the great Universities were until quite recently invariably men who had accepted a whole system, their fettering power cannot fail to be exceedingly great,—the simple fact that "free thought" is a term of reproach, and a "free thinker" a person much more to be avoided than a mere drunkard or liar, sufficiently indicates *how* great. There are, fortunately, no "articles" of philosophy; but of course philosophy, like all forms of thought, is modified by its historical setting; and it is no less necessary in the case of philosophy than in the case of poetry, to get a clear conception of the state of things about the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Ever since the publication of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, the contribution of Scotland to philosophic thought has been far greater than her population or her general culture would justify anyone in expecting. At times it has rivalled, and perhaps even surpassed, that of England. For some generations before the opening of the nineteenth century, the study of philosophy had been a tradition in the Scottish Universities; indeed, it had been so from their very foundation; but in earlier days philosophy

was rather the handmaid of theology than a spirit of free and untrammelled investigation of the fundamental laws of the universe. It is, therefore, necessary to ask what was the condition of philosophic thought in Scotland in the early part of the nineteenth century.

With the exception of Kant, the two most original thinkers of the latter half of the eighteenth century were the Scotsmen, David Hume and Adam Smith. Their death left a blank which was never filled; and the development of what is called the Scottish philosophy was on the line of opposition to Hume, not of agreement with him or development from him. James Beattie and Thomas Reid, both professors of the University of Aberdeen[1], undertook the defence of orthodoxy against the assaults of the sceptic. Beattie's book was just good enough to win the praise of that sturdy bundle of prejudices, Samuel Johnson; but it was not good enough to be remembered. Reid, on the other hand, founded a school, and is still well known as the father of the Scottish philosophy. His disciple, Dugald Stewart (1753–1828), was the chief of this school in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. He had small power of original speculation, and added little or nothing to the principles of Reid; but his eloquence and the moral elevation of his character made him a force not in Scotland only, but throughout the English-speaking world. He would have a claim to remembrance if it were only for the sake of the great men whom he influenced. Among his pupils who afterwards won distinction in philosophy were Thomas Brown, Sir James Mackintosh and James Mill. The founders of the *Edinburgh Review*, Sydney Smith, Jeffrey, Brougham and Horner, also owed much to his teaching; and the greatest of all his pupils was Walter Scott. Most of the Senators of the College of Justice for a generation also passed through his hands. It is a convincing testimony to the charm of Stewart that with scarcely an exception they speak in the warmest terms of his teaching and influence. Scott writes that the "striking and impressive eloquence" of Stewart "riveted the attention even of the most

[1] Reid migrated in 1764 to Glasgow, where he succeeded Adam Smith in the chair of moral philosophy.

volatile student[1]." Lord Cockburn declares that his excellence as a lecturer was "so great that it is a luxury to recall it[2]"; and he quotes with approval the saying of Mackintosh that "the peculiar glory of Stewart's eloquence consisted in its having '*breathed the love of virtue into whole generations* of pupils[3].'" Cockburn went so far as to say that there was eloquence in Stewart's very spitting (he was asthmatic). "Then," said the philosopher, to whom the saying was repeated, "I am glad there was at least one thing in which I had no competitor[4]."

Notwithstanding the charm of style and the personal attractiveness of Stewart, Scottish philosophy in his day was in its decline. As has been already said, he added nothing to the substance of Reid; and death rapidly swept away those who might have supplied his deficiencies. Thomas Brown (1778–1820), who was a poet as well as a philosopher, died before his teacher, to whom he had acted as colleague from 1810 to 1820, when Stewart resigned. His speculative gifts were superior to those of Stewart, and his system, a kind of amalgam of Hume with Reid, is more original; but the great fame and the wide popularity of his *Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect* (1818) have long been forgotten. Sir James Mackintosh (1765–1832) was a man of whom, if he had died young, it would have been said with confidence that he had the capacity to do great work either in philosophy or in history. He attained the age of sixty-seven, and the work he actually accomplished must be admitted to be a little disappointing. No fresh philosophical conception is due to him; though he had a great reputation for learning, his knowledge both of Greek and of German philosophy was superficial; and his work fares ill under the scrutiny of James Mill. The critic survived the subject of his criticism only four years; and with his death the last great Scot of philosophic temperament seemed to have gone. The clearance was as complete as that of the poets in the third and fourth decades of the century.

The academical *status* of philosophy had fallen deplorably.

[1] Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, i. chap. i.
[2] *Memorials of his Time*, 19.
[3] *Life of Jeffrey*, 49.
[4] *Memorials of his Time*, 22.

Professor Alexander Campbell Fraser declares that "in 1836 philosophy was at a lower ebb in Scotland than at any time since the advent of Francis Hutcheson from Ireland to Glasgow, rather more than a century before[1]"; and Professor Fraser speaks from personal experience of two of the Scottish Universities. At Glasgow indeed there was Mylne, whom he regards as "probably the most independent thinker in the Scottish philosophical professoriate of that time[2],"—a man who wrote no books but who could evidently form the minds of his pupils. But in Edinburgh, he found in the chair of logic David Ritchie, who treated the subject "more as an appendage to his ministerial charge than as the professor's supreme interest[3]." It is true that contemporaneously with Ritchie's tenure of the chair of logic, the brilliant John Wilson held that of moral philosophy; but, poet and man of genius though Wilson was, he was not a philosopher. Indeed, the fact that on the death of Brown he was elected to the chair of moral philosophy in preference to Hamilton, is itself a proof that the serious study of philosophy had ceased.

If Professor Fraser is right in fixing upon 1836 as the year in which philosophy in Scotland had sunk lowest, this is a case in which the darkest hour was just before the dawn; for in 1836 Sir William Hamilton (1788–1856) was appointed professor of logic and metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh, and for the remaining twenty years of his life he was generally regarded as the foremost man in British philosophy. Hamilton had the advantage of the double training of a Scottish University and of an English one. Upon the metaphysical stock of the former he grafted the scholarly culture of Oxford, but not perhaps her scholarly grace; for his learning sat somewhat heavily upon him. Trained for the bar, he acquired sufficient legal skill to establish his own title to a baronetcy; but his true interest was always in philosophy. He was an associate of that group of young men of literary tastes who then abounded in Edinburgh. He shared their full-blooded vitality, took part in the wild fun of the *Chaldee MS.*, is credited with the composition of one verse of it, and is

[1] *Biographia Philosophica*, 46.
[2] *ibid.* 42. [3] *ibid.* 46.

said to have fallen off his chair with laughter at his own jest. A mysterious estrangement between him and Lockhart was the cause of life-long pain to both.

Hamilton had already reached middle age when he was appointed professor of logic and metaphysics. For years he had enjoyed the reputation of being one of the most learned men in Britain,—perhaps the most learned of all. He had written little, but he had read enormously. Scarcely any subject came amiss to him; no "authority" was too mean to be consulted. At Oxford he studied witchcraft: "He seriously considers it as worth his while," says Lockhart, "to pore over Wierus and Bodinus, and all the believers in witchcraft from St Augustine downwards[1]." He was familiar with the German revival of animal magnetism when Carlyle knew him in 1824 or 1825, long before the knowledge of it had spread to England[2]. Notwithstanding all this mass of learning, at forty-eight Hamilton was still reading with the voracious appetite of a man who is mastered by the instinct for accumulating knowledge. In the interval between his appointment and the beginning of his duties, the reading went on at an accelerated pace. The opening of the session found him with little or nothing written, and the lectures afterwards so celebrated were, his biographer says, the product of the night's toil before the morning on which each was delivered. Their history explains some of the characteristics which strike the reader, but it hardly excuses Hamilton's failure to remedy their defects in subsequent years. The substance of thought is beaten out very thin, and the excessive use of quotation seriously tells against Hamilton's claim to originality.

During the twenty years of his professoriate Hamilton added little to the substance of his lectures as they were originally delivered. Neither did he write very much. An elaborate edition, with notes, of the works of Thomas Reid; an edition, less important, of the works of Dugald Stewart; and a volume of *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature*, reprinted (1852) from periodicals, were the sole important publications of Hamilton's life. His influence was mainly based upon the lecture room, and

[1] Lang's *Lockhart*, i. 57. [2] Veitch's *Life of Hamilton*.

it is by the *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic*, published after his death (1859–1861), that he is still best known.

The immense influence which, for about a generation, Hamilton exercised over philosophic thought, was mainly due to two causes. First and greatest was the personal magnetism of the man, which was greatly increased by his position in the chair of metaphysics in the metropolitan University of Scotland. Nearly all the ablest men who passed through that University during Hamilton's tenure of office bore his stamp through life. Pupils of speculative proclivities, like Mansel and Veitch, the editors of the *Lectures*, were often moulded in Hamilton's own image, and followed him with a fidelity only too unquestioning. But they who largely disagree with Hamilton bear testimony no less emphatic to his personal attractiveness and his mental power. "I owe more to Hamilton," says the Berkeleian Professor Fraser, "than to any other intellectual influence[1]." "Morally and intellectually," says J. F. Ferrier, "Sir William Hamilton was among the greatest of the great. A simpler and a grander nature never arose out of darkness into human life; a truer and a manlier character God never made[2]." And he who is thus warm in his praise adds that he knew Hamilton "better than any other man ever did." The sway of Hamilton was not, however, confined to men of philosophic tastes. A Scottish professor of philosophy holds a position of almost matchless power, if he only knows how to use it. Year after year scores of young men, on the whole the *élite* of the country, pass under his influence,—nearly all more or less imbued with the national taste for speculation, nearly all disposed to regard the professor as an oracle. They become in after life, each in his own little sphere, the leaders of the nation. The advocate at the bar, the village minister, doctor, lawyer, schoolmaster, thus receive their education; and through them the influence of one powerful mind may filter down to hundreds and thousands who never heard so much as the name of the teacher. Ever since the revival of the Scottish Universities in the eighteenth century, there have been a few such men; and Hamilton was one of the greatest of them. He has left

[1] *Biographia Philosophica*, 58.

[2] Ferrier's *Philosophical Works*, i. 555.

no written work half as valuable as that which was inscribed on the lives and characters of his pupils, and through them on the nation.

The second source of Hamilton's influence (second in importance, though first in time) was his learning. Years before he had written anything of note, his name was known not in Britain only, but in Germany as well, as that of one of the most learned of living men in classics and philosophy. Since Hamilton's death, doubts have been raised about the depth and accuracy of his learning. But the question is not important; for it is plain that, though he had read enormously, he had not always read wisely; and his permanent fame is more likely to be damaged than increased by his learning. Probably no Englishman at that time had made so wide a study of German philosophy; but unfortunately it was not a fruitful study. For comprehension of the mind of Germany, Hamilton is not to be compared either with Coleridge or with Carlyle. It is strange that, though Hamilton was an admirable German scholar, he seems to have been content to take his knowledge of Kant largely at second-hand; but the fact goes far to explain his blindness to the real significance of the critical philosophy. He saw that it was important, and he turned the attention of others to it; but the man who wrote as he did about the distinction between Reason and Understanding had not penetrated deeply into it. "Why distinguish Reason (*Vernunft*)," he asks, "from Understanding (*Verstand*), simply on the ground that the former is conversant about, or rather tends towards, the Unconditioned; when it is sufficiently apparent, that the Unconditioned is conceived only as the negation of the Conditioned, and also that the conception of contradictories is one? In the Kantian philosophy both faculties perform the same function, both seek the one in the many; the Idea (*Idee*) is only the Concept (*Begriff*) sublimated into the inconceivable; Reason only the Understanding which has 'overleaped itself[1].'" All his reading of the Germans never revealed to Hamilton that the significance of Kant lay in his going back to principles prior to Reid, prior to Hume, prior to Locke. His attempt to weld the

[1] *Discussions on Philosophy*, 16–17.

incompatibles, Scottish and German philosophy, entangled him in a hopeless maze.

"For thirty years past, I have been of opinion that the dedication of his powers to the service of Dr Reid was a perversion of his genius, that this was the one mistake of his career, and that he would have done far better if he had built entirely on his own foundation[1]." So wrote Ferrier shortly after Hamilton's death, and we can only repeat his words now. Led astray, perhaps, by a mistaken patriotism, and an equally mistaken conception of orthodoxy, Hamilton spent his life in a vain attempt to establish the principles of the philosophy of common sense. That philosophy was in its inception an attempt to buttress faith against the sceptic battery of Hume, and that motive influenced nearly every member of the school from Reid himself down to Mansel. Unfortunately, the essence of the attempt lay, not in an answer to Hume, but in the assertion that no answer was needed. To Hume's argument that we have no guarantee of any real *nexus* between cause and effect, but only an experience of invariable sequence, Reid in effect replies that the *nexus* is real, because he and all plain men feel it to be so. No amount of rarefying of common sense changes the essence of the argument, or meets the objection that the same argument supports the belief that the sun goes round the earth. Unquestionably our senses tell us so, and no unsophisticated man ever thought otherwise.

This fundamental mistake vitiates all Hamilton's philosophy, and makes his influence, both in logic and in metaphysics, somewhat unwholesome. His only important contribution to logical doctrine (supposing the question of priority to be settled in his favour) was the theory of the quantified predicate; and its effect was to force logic still farther along the barren path of formalism, and to widen the breach between logical theory and the facts of human thought. The full advantages (such as they were) which Hamilton claimed for quantification could be secured only at the price of setting up propositional forms which no human being ever used in practice; and quantification further strengthened the tendency among logicians, already far too strong, to regard the

[1] Ferrier's *Philosophical Works*, i. 556.

predicate equally with the subject as a class notion, ignoring the fact that in the immense majority of significant judgments it is an attribute. Even the person who uses the familiar example, Man is mortal, seldom concerns himself with the question whether man is all mortal or only some mortal; and it is safe to assume that Adam did not ask it when the death of Abel brought the fact of human mortality home to him. Neither did the discoverer of the X-rays, or of argon, or of radium, pause before announcing his discovery, to ask whether his proposition was simply convertible, or convertible only by limitation. The presence in the subject of the attribute indicated by the predicate is sufficient: *qua* attribute, it is all there, if it is there at all. The question whether it may or may not be in something else is a later and a minor one.

In Hamilton's theory of perception we see the result of an attempt to harmonise irreconcilables. While admitting that knowledge is subjective and relative, he tries to maintain the position of "natural realism"; in other words, our minds make the knowledge which we possess, and at the same time we know an external world independent of our minds. A similar desire to "run with the hare and hunt with the hounds" may be detected in his theory of the conditioned. According to this, human thought in the last resort is always driven to choose between two contradictory alternatives, neither of which is conceivable, and yet one of which must be true. For example, space must either be limited or unlimited, and we can conceive neither the one alternative nor the other. If we attempt to imagine a limited space, we are driven immediately to ask, what is the nature of the boundary, and what is outside of it? If there is something outside, what contains that something? if there is nothing, how can nothing abut upon the boundary of space? On the other alternative of an unlimited space, the difficulty is equally insuperable. We can conceive a space stretching on and on indefinitely, but when we have widened our imagination to the utmost, and conceived the distance between earth and the remotest star multiplied by millions, we are still only at the beginning of infinity. In the same way, moral freedom and necessity are alike unthinkable; "but practically, our conscious-

ness of the moral law, which, without a moral liberty in man, would be a mendacious imperative, gives a decisive preponderance to the doctrine of freedom over the doctrine of fate. We are free to act, if we are responsible for our actions[1]."

No doctrine more profoundly sceptical than this was ever promulgated. The intellect is brought helplessly to a pause before the two contradictory and inconceivable alternatives. And yet one of them must be true. Hamilton's system supplies no answer to the natural question, which? So far as intellect is concerned, it might be determined by tossing a penny. In the case of freedom *versus* necessity, indeed, an apparent success is gained by the appeal to the moral imperative; but there is no imperative to appeal to in the case of the inconceivables, bounded or unbounded space, infinite or finite time. Neither is it clear that such an appeal is possible as between the conception of a world God-created or a world self-begotten or unbeginning. The choice seems to be arbitrary. It would appear that there may be two systems of philosophy, absolutely contradictory, and yet standing on precisely the same plane, as regards the evidence of their truth. But if the foundation is thus uncertain, what are we to think of the superstructure? Should we have chosen the wrong alternative, surely no castle in the air could be more unreal than the system built upon it. Hume himself was less destructive, for he left undisputed the fact of invariable sequence. Yet there can be no doubt that Hamilton's doctrine was advanced with the desire to aid faith against unbelief, and under the honest conviction that it would do so. Here, at the foundation of our intellectual life, was mystery; and the addition of a few other mysteries in its progress would matter little. If reason is so impotent, what temptation is there to rebel against authority? Hamilton accordingly expressed the conviction that the philosophy of the conditioned would be found to be "the most useful auxiliary of theology[2]." "A world of false, and pestilent, and presumptuous reasoning, by which philosophy and theology are now equally discredited, would be at once abolished, in the recognition of this rule of prudent nescience[3]." Unfortunately, the author of the

[1] *Discussions*, 620. [2] *ibid.* 621. [3] *ibid.*

rule forgot that in retaining the positive teaching of theology he was himself transgressing the rule. Others, less swayed by prepossessions, were more logical; and the philosophy of the conditioned became the foundation of the agnosticism of Herbert Spencer and of Huxley.

Hamilton did not himself apply the philosophy of the conditioned to the fundamental conceptions of theology; but he distinctly suggested its application; and he quoted with approval "the declarations of a pious philosophy:—'A God understood would be no God at all';—'To think that God is, as we can think him to be, is blasphemy[1].'" The actual adaptation of the Hamiltonian philosophy to theology was the work of Henry Longueville Mansel (1820–1871), the ablest of all Hamilton's pupils. Mansel's great power and acuteness of mind soon raised him to prominence in the Church of England. At Oxford he was successively reader in philosophy, Waynflete professor, and professor of ecclesiastical history; and shortly before his death he was appointed Dean of St Paul's. His chief works were the *Prolegomena Logica* (1851), *The Limits of Religious Thought* (1859), which had been delivered in the year preceding their publication as lectures under the Bampton foundation, and the *Philosophy of the Conditioned* (1866). In all of them, Mansel shows himself the pupil of Hamilton; in the first-named, he expounds again with great acuteness the principles of the Hamiltonian logic; in the last, he defends both his mentor and himself from the strictures of Mill, whose *Examination of Hamilton* had appeared shortly before. But the work in which Mansel showed most originality, and that by which he is best known, is his *Limits of Religious Thought*. The popular favour which this book won was balanced by the powerful dislike it excited in the minds of men of the most diverse views who saw the unsoundness of the foundation. It was attacked by Maurice, who considered his controversy with Mansel the most important work of his life. Mill called it a "loathsome" book, and indignantly disowned all allegiance to the God of Mansel. And Huxley compared Mansel to the drunken fellow in Hogarth's *Contested Election*, who is sawing

[1] *Discussions*, 15, n.

through the sign-post on the outer end of which he is himself sitting[1].

What roused Mill's loathing was Mansel's distinction between the relative morality of man and the absolute morality of God; which in its application seems to introduce the possibility that absolute or divine morality may bear a strange resemblance to relative or human immorality. What stirred Maurice, as well as many simple-minded pious people, was the perception that the application of the Hamiltonian principle of the conditioned to the conception of Deity, really makes it illogical to assert the existence of a God at all. Numbers who had not the wit to think of Hogarth's drunkard and his sign-post, felt dimly what Huxley saw clearly, and were uneasily conscious that the foothold of faith was giving way. The wheel was come full circle: Hamilton had dug a pit for Reason, and Faith was in danger of falling in. It would not be easy to find a more striking example of an intellectual Nemesis.

The first half of the nineteenth century was the period of the sway of the Scottish school, but in the third quarter of the century it was ousted from the pride of place by the Utilitarians, whose tenets were for a time received as something like a philosophic revelation. These Utilitarians form one of the most clearly-marked groups in early Victorian literature. They grew up under the personal influence of Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), the founder of the school, and for many years they grouped themselves round his devoted disciple James Mill (1773–1836). The dates of Bentham are noteworthy. Though he lived for nearly a generation into the nineteenth century he was in all essentials a man of the eighteenth. His *Fragment on Government* appeared in 1776, the year of the death of Hume, and his *Principles of Morals and Legislation* was privately printed in 1780, the year when the *Encyclopédie* was completed. The substance of his thought is in harmony with the dates of these works. It is essentially the thought of the eighteenth century; and thus Bentham makes his disciples, radical as they were, in some respects the most old-fashioned among the thinkers of the time.

[1] *Life of Huxley*, i. 202.

More than anywhere else in the nineteenth century we find in them the intellectual atmosphere of the eighteenth. They are inheritors of the Revolution with none of that glow from romance which brightened others who were inspired by it. Theirs is still the sphere of the understanding to the almost total exclusion of imagination and of "reason" in the sense which it bears in German philosophy. A cold, hard, clear and somewhat narrow logic is the instrument of their thought. Suffrages, majorities, ballot-boxes, the "machinery" upon which Carlyle poured his ridicule, form their panacea for all social and political evils. For metaphysical groundwork they go back to Hume and found upon him in almost complete oblivion that the criticism of Kant had intervened.

The founder of the Utilitarian school was a man who, more perhaps than any other of equal distinction who ever lived, needed an interpreter; and an interpreter he found in James Mill, one of the earliest and assuredly one of the most efficient of his disciples. Mill did not a little to import into English thought a quality of his countrymen commonly believed to be more characteristic of them than the mysticism of Carlyle. The phrase "hard-headed Scot" is never better used than when it is applied to the historian of British India. It indicates both his merits and his defects; and both alike attracted him to Bentham. Soon after the beginning of the personal acquaintance between the two men in 1808, Mill came to be recognised as the mouthpiece of Bentham; and as his powerful intellect attracted men with tastes and tendencies similar to his own, while certain features of his character, which show conspicuously in the autobiography of his son, rather repelled an opposite type, his house became the chief centre in London of the Benthamite thinkers. They derived all the benefits which arise from intercourse with sympathetic minds; but perhaps at the same time they suffered some of the evils from which the association of a coterie is rarely free.

Among the men who frequented the house of James Mill were John Austin (1790–1859), the philosophical jurist, and George Grote, the historian of Greece; and the influence of the former introduced, a little later, his brilliant brother Charles, who gave

the Utilitarians a connexion with a remarkable set of Cambridge men. More important than any of these was Mill's own son, John Stuart Mill.

The bond which united these men was the bond of common opinions. They all held the philosophical creed of Utilitarianism, though they had come to it in different ways,—John Mill by inheritance, Grote as a pupil of the elder Mill, Austin, as John Mill tells us, by independent thought and investigation. Like the founder of the philosophy himself, like English thinkers in general, they were not content with speculation as an end in itself. They philosophised that they might the better know how to legislate and to govern; and so they were united also as a political party, "the philosophical radicals." Though their doctrines were at the time thought to be extreme, most of them would appear moderate now. They were too deeply imbued with the principles of economics to lose hold of practical considerations, and readers of Mill's *Liberty* need not be told that they were far from desiring the subversion of order.

They were also united in what they rejected and in what they lacked, as well as in the qualities they possessed and the opinions they held in common. In religion, they were all sceptics more or less complete. In respect of education, Grote, John Austin and John Stuart Mill were all alike destitute of those University associations and free from the influence of those University traditions which as a rule do so much to mould the thought of intellectual men. The fact that they had no share in those associations and traditions made it easier for them to adopt radical opinions, and perhaps made them more original. Possibly the same fact may help to account for the tendency which they show in their schemes and theories to forget or to underrate the human element. The mingling in youth with equals of different types and of contrary opinions would have helped to correct this error. Though not solitary thinkers, they were essentially a coterie, in spite of what John Mill did in the Utilitarian Society to introduce other elements. No doubt the absence of University training influenced their conceptions of what such training ought to be. Their educational ideals were German rather than English.

Further, all the Utilitarians (with the exception of John Stuart Mill) showed the same striking deficiency on the imaginative and emotional sides. They were too exclusively "reasoning machines"; and the defect is seriously felt in their works. It is this defect which condemns Austin to creep along the ground, and, while doing valuable work in reducing jurisprudence to a science, to enunciate new principles so that they seem commonplaces. Perhaps Grote suffered most of all. A little imagination would have lighted up his drab and dreary style, and might have saved him from the fundamental error of his history, the naive belief that it is possible to draw lessons direct from the Athenian democracy of the fifth century B.C. to the English democracy of the nineteenth century A.D.

The Utilitarians, then, inherit a philosophy for whose source we must seek in the eighteenth century. On its basis they establish a political tradition, and work zealously for the development of that democracy whose advent to power is the great political feature of the nineteenth century. They are pioneers in the movement for popular education. They are champions of free thought; and for this reason they are regarded by the majority of their contemporaries with deep distrust. They are not by predilection literary at all, and they write books only because they have to use language in order to communicate their thoughts. Their literary sympathies are consequently limited, and, except in the case of John Stuart Mill, their literary gift is not great. The name Utilitarian is admirably descriptive of the aim and spirit of the school; and whether their fundamental principle be philosophically sound or not, at any rate the steady pursuit of the end indicated by that name saved them from mere logomachies and gave substance and body to their work. The primary interest of Bentham himself lay, as is well known, in legislation; and in respect of the theory of legislation his work was carried on by John Austin, the most celebrated of English writers on jurisprudence until, in Leslie Stephen's phrase, his star set as the star of Maine rose.

Austin belonged to the class of men who enjoy among contemporaries a great reputation which can hardly be justified to

after ages. *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined* (1832) and the *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, posthumously published in 1863, do not bear out the opinion his friends held of him. They are arid and verbose. Mill ascribes Austin's comparative failure to over-elaboration: "When his task ought to have been completed, he had generally worked himself into an illness, without having half finished what he undertook." There must, however, have been a deeper reason in mental deficiencies not suspected by Austin's friends; for, in their literary aspect at least, his works could well have borne more elaboration than they received, and they are by no means conspicuous for that vigour and richness of expression which, we are told, distinguished their author's conversation. It cannot be pleaded that his subject did not admit of attractive treatment; for the example of Maine proves the contrary. But comparison with Maine suggests that the impression of aridity which Austin conveys to the modern mind is due partly, not to his fault, but to a change in taste. He lived before the rise of the historical school. He is highly abstract in his method: his definitions of "sovereignty" and "law" are given as things absolute, without, apparently, a suspicion that definitions sound in a certain historical setting might elsewhere and under other circumstances be quite misleading. Bagehot has aptly compared jurisprudence so conceived with the economics of Ricardo. Distrust of the method has led to doubt about the conclusion in both cases. Granted the conditions presupposed, and the reasoning is sound enough. But do the facts square with the presuppositions?

It was, however, to John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) that there fell the task of carrying on the work of Bentham through the period with which we have to deal, and to his influence must be ascribed the temporary supremacy of Utilitarianism.

John Stuart Mill was a Benthamite from the cradle. For his benefit his father devised, wholly under Benthamite ideas, the extraordinary system of education described in the *Autobiography*. Never was system more successful from the point of view of the man who devised it, seldom have the effects of an experiment upon the subject of it been more debatable. In after years

we seem to see the soul of Mill, like Milton's lion at creation, struggling to get free. Whether he ever succeeded, as the lion did, is doubtful. "It may be questioned," writes a thoughtful essayist, "whether the real John Stuart Mill ever did exist; such had been the effect of the force employed to impress the mould of other minds on his[1]."

Mill himself estimated very highly the benefit he derived from his father's system. Taught Greek at three, he grew up a prodigy of precocious learning. "I started," he says, "I may fairly say, with an advantage of a quarter of a century over my contemporaries"; and when we find men of talent and even genius, who were twelve or fifteen years his seniors, treating him even in boyhood as an equal, we see that there must have been good ground for the assertion. Yet there were drawbacks whose importance Mill may not have fully realised. "I am thus," he says again, "one of the very few examples, in this country, of one who has not thrown off religious belief, but never had it." This he never regretted. But there was another omission which he did live to lament. He confesses that his father's training led to "an undervaluing of poetry, and of Imagination generally, as an element of human nature," and that the common notion of a Benthamite as "a mere reasoning machine" was, during two or three years, not altogether untrue of him. He who bends nature too far must beware of the rebound. The violent repression, for such it really was, of one side of Mill's nature led, in 1826 and 1827, to a spiritual crisis[2], and it is interesting to learn that in this crisis Mill found comfort in the "healing influence" of that poetry which his father and Bentham had depreciated, and especially in the poetry of one so far removed from his teachers as Wordsworth.

Mill affords one of the best examples of the value of the study of character as furnishing a key to the interpretation of writings,

[1] Wilson Stuart's *English Philosophical Styles*.

[2] Bain and, following him, Leslie Stephen, ascribe this crisis to over-work; but though over-work may have been the occasion, Mill's own account (*Autobiography*, 132 sqq.) suggests that there was a deeper cause behind, namely, dissatisfaction with what had hitherto been his ideal of life, as a thing too limited to yield satisfaction.

even when they are of an abstract, philosophic kind. Critics of his philosophy have observed in how great a degree it is a conglomerate of materials derived from all sources, and sometimes imperfectly fused with its Benthamite basis. Critics of his style have noticed how he frequently passes from an exact but ponderous technical phraseology to an infinitely more telling but not always exact form of popular statement. These would be strange characteristics if they belonged to a mere "reasoning machine"; but they are explainable when we observe that the reasoning machine was of James Mill's manufacture, and that the real John Stuart Mill was a being highly emotional, sensitive to many influences, not a mystic, as Carlyle at first took him to be, but with elements in him which under other training might have developed into mysticism. The man who found the balm for his spiritual trouble in Wordsworth, the hero-worshipper who sat at the feet successively of Bentham, Carlyle, Comte, Mrs Taylor and her daughter, could be no mere machine for the manufacture of syllogisms. He might be acute in handling them; but he would never be either wholly destitute of that inspiration which apprehends truths that cannot be proved, or wholly free from the danger of sudden lapses and inconsistencies. And it is just such inconsistencies which form a trap for the unwary in Mill's writings.

Mill's engaging docility, the humility of mind which left him open to the most diverse impressions, is well illustrated by the story of his relations with Carlyle. He found Carlyle hard to understand. On reading *Sartor Resartus* he "made little of it"; but afterwards, when it was published, he "read it with enthusiastic admiration and the keenest delight." He never did understand Carlyle completely, and he never made any close approach to Carlyle's opinions. "I did not, however," he says, "deem myself a competent judge of Carlyle. I felt that he was a poet, and that I was not; that he was a man of intuition, which I was not; and that, as such, he not only saw many things long before me, which I could only, when they were pointed out to me, hobble after and prove, but that it was highly probable he could see many things which were not visible to me even after they were pointed out. I knew that I could not see round him, and could never be certain

that I saw over him[1]." The transparent candour of these sentences, the unruffled evenness of judgment with which Mill compares himself with his great contemporary, and the ready frankness with which he admits the certainty of Carlyle's superiority in some respects and the possibility of his superiority in others, are admirable.

This passage illustrates well the possibilities for good inherent in Mill's receptivity, and in his freedom from any overweening egotism. The possibilities for evil also inherent in these qualities are equally well illustrated by the continuation of the passage:—"I never presumed to judge him with any definiteness, until he was interpreted to me by one greatly the superior of us both—who was more a poet than he, and more a thinker than I—whose own mind and nature included his, and infinitely more[2]." Needless to say, this phœnix, who was more a poet than the writer of the storming of the Bastille, and more a thinker than the author of the *Logic*, was Mrs Taylor. In his references to her, Mill loses all sense of measure and proportion, and it is difficult to keep due patience, even with the help of the reflection that the words are the words of a doting husband about his dead wife. They are also the words of a man who was liable to lose his judgment.

The book in which this interesting and attractive character may best be studied is the invaluable *Autobiography* (1873); which is not only, in the purely literary sense, one of the best of Mill's works, but one of the most interesting revelations of a great mind ever given to the world. All the influences which went to form Mill's intellect and character, all that he thought, all that he was and aspired to be, are here explained with uncompromising frankness. No form of literature is more attractive than autobiography when it is thoroughly sincere, as Mill's is. Whether he always understood others, or even himself, may be doubted; but in the *Autobiography* he always sets down what he really believes. It is this, combined with the fact that the style is throughout Mill's simpler, more homely style, that gives the book its literary charm. Without effort, without inflation or pretence, but never meanly, he tells his story; and new things in recent

[1] *Autobiography*, 176. [2] *Ibid.*

literature are more worthy of attention than the narrative of the way in which the powerful young mind grew under his father's influence; how Dumont's *Traité de Législation* came upon him almost as a revelation; how "Philip Beauchamp's" *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind* had power upon him only inferior to that; how he struggled to burst his bonds; and how forces the most diverse, some of them poles asunder from Benthamism, Wordsworthian, Coleridgean and Comtist forces, produced their effect upon him; and how finally a nature inherently emotional passed under the sway of two women, Mrs Taylor and her daughter.

It is evident that from the first there were germs in Mill of something richer than the hard and dry, though powerful, intellect of his father could comprehend. His face, as it may be seen depicted by Watts on the walls of the National Portrait Gallery, might pass for that of a mediæval saint; and Gladstone, who called him "the saint of rationalism," must have been impressed by him in the same way as the painter was. In youth, Sir Henry Taylor declared, Mill seemed so naturally and necessarily good that men hardly thought of him as having occasion for a conscience. Caroline Fox more than once remarks on the extreme refinement of his expression; and in a letter to her Mill probably betrays the secret of that refinement, in laying down the "one plain rule of life eternally binding, and independent of all variation in creeds," which is this: "Try thyself unweariedly till thou findest the highest thing thou art capable of doing, faculties and outward circumstances being both duly considered, and then DO IT."

A man so constituted could not be bound within the limits of any single formula or system. He had found in Dumont "a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy; in one of the best senses of the word, a religion[1]"; but to the Gospel according to Bentham and Dumont he soon added the Gospel according to Malthus, declaring the population principle to be "quite as much a banner" as any Benthamite principle. He added also many things much more widely divergent from Benthamism. He took every opportunity of cultivating the friendship of men of ability and character,

[1] *Autobiography*, 67.

however diverse their opinions. He dates from meetings and discussions in Grote's room his "real inauguration as an original and independent thinker[1]." He met and debated with the Owenites, differing widely from them, but respecting their zeal for the social improvement of the working classes. He made the acquaintance also of the Coleridgeans, Maurice and Sterling, breathing in their society an intellectual atmosphere wholly different from that to which he had been accustomed; and we have already seen how he wrestled with Carlyle, and, like Jacob of old, would not let him go without a blessing. Mill judged correctly when he pronounced himself much superior to most of his contemporaries "in willingness and ability to learn from everybody[2]."

For thirty-four years of his life Mill was a busy official in the India Office; and, like many other men of letters, he valued highly the practical experience so acquired. His labours in literature and philosophy were carried on concurrently with this official work. They began early. From the foundation of the *Westminster Review* in 1824 the younger Mill was an active contributor. The *Review* was established by Bentham as the organ of his opinions; but it was from the first as disappointing to the Utilitarians as it was disquieting to many of their opponents. In 1828 Mill ceased to write for it. He afterwards contributed to the *Examiner*, and in 1834 became editor of the newly-established *London Review* (known in later days as the *London and Westminster*); an office which absorbed nearly all his spare time and energy till 1840.

The character of Mill was now fully formed, and his apprenticeship in literature and philosophy served. He had written much, but he had hitherto published no independent book. In the comparative leisure following his resignation of the editorship of the *Review*, he was about to enter upon a new phase of his career; and henceforth the landmarks of his life are, with two exceptions, the dates of the publication of his books.

The two exceptions are his marriage, and his election to Parliament as member for Westminster. It was in 1830 that

[1] *Autobiography*, 123. [2] *ibid.* 242.

Mill first met Mrs Taylor. Her first husband was then alive; but within a few years a very unusual and scarcely defensible—though, Mill assures us, a morally pure—relation sprang up between her and Mill. It was the cause of endless difficulties and of several estrangements between Mill and his friends. At last, in 1849, Mr Taylor died, and two years later his widow married Mill. One of Mill's encomiums on his wife has already been quoted. He was never weary of sounding her praises in the most extravagant fashion. The dedication of the treatise on *Liberty*, the inscription upon her grave at Avignon and numerous passages in the *Autobiography*, bear witness to his complete infatuation. If we could trust his judgment, we must ascribe some of the most important of his works at least as much to her as to himself. But there is no evidence of a revolution in Mill's thought after he came under Mrs Taylor's influence. Some years passed before the acquaintance became intimate; and though Mill was still young and had written little, his mind was mature far beyond his years. All the elements which afterwards showed themselves were already present in it. The probability is that Mrs Taylor rather adopted her opinions from Mill, and that the latter was led to overrate her by hearing his own views echoed back by a beloved voice. It may well be that on some points, especially in *The Subjection of Women*, her influence was important; but she was neither the author of Mill's philosophy, nor did she greatly modify its substance.

The history of Mill's election as member of Parliament for Westminster is alike honourable to the body of Liberals who invited him to stand, and to him who accepted their invitation. He stipulated that he should not be expected to canvass, and he was returned simply on the ground of his eminence in philosophy and his life long interest in good government. At the election of 1868, however, he was defeated; and unfortunately the men of Westminster had not the opportunity to repair their error, as the electors of Edinburgh had done in the case of Macaulay. Mill's life was drawing to a close. He retired to Avignon, where he died in 1873.

The remarkable unity of aim pervading Mill's writings makes the simplest classification of them also the best; while all divisions

must be recognised as of only partial validity. Like all the Utilitarians, in everything that he wrote Mill had in view a practical end; but sometimes the end was nearer, and sometimes more remote. He was conscious that no great and far-reaching purpose could be achieved except upon a basis of principle. Some of his works, therefore, are primarily concerned with theory; that is, they are philosophical, and map out the field of thought. In other works Mill applies the principles he has laid down in his philosophy, and is directly practical. And the sphere of his practice is social life, the science of government. The second class of his works, therefore, is political, and deals with the machinery of government. It must be added that the philosophical writings exist for the sake of the political ones, and the author is never happier than when he can mingle a practical element with theory. Mill shows little interest in philosophic speculation in and for itself. In his *Political Economy* he is more concerned with the light thrown by the science upon society, than with the science itself. It was Benthamism in its bearing upon legislation which furnished him with "a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy, a religion"; it was the very practical aspect of Malthusianism which made that too "a banner."

For a statement of Mill's philosophical principles we naturally turn to the *System of Logic* (1843), the *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) and *Utilitarianism* (1863), where they are directly expounded. In *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (1865) and in the *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865) they have partly to be inferred from the criticisms passed upon other thinkers.

The *System of Logic* remains the most original as it was the first important work of Mill. In itself a remarkable book, it is still more remarkable when viewed in relation to the state of philosophic thought in England. When Mill began the study of logic, the antiquated Aldrich, Whately's little text-book and Hobbes's *Computatio sive Logica* were the only authorities he could find to work upon. Hamilton's lectures were then accessible only to his own pupils. On the Continent things were different. Hegel had lived and written his logic and died. Mill, who knew German, was induced by Sterling to study the German

philosophers; but, like many Englishmen of that time, he failed to enter into the spirit of their thought. To this failure we may trace his worst mistakes.

The wish to supply the deficiency which had been forced upon his notice by his own early studies was one of the motives which induced Mill to write his *Logic*. Apart from its intrinsic merits, the extraordinary influence it exercised would of itself suffice to make it one of the most noteworthy books of the nineteenth century. Bagehot did not exaggerate when, on the death of Mill, he wrote that half the minds of the younger generation of Englishmen had been greatly coloured by it, and would have been sensibly different if they had not received its influence. The secret of this influence is doubtless to be found in the breadth of Mill's view, in the decision with which he cuts himself loose from mere formalism, and in the close connexion between his logical principles and the intellectual work of his own generation. While Hamilton's teaching was tending to more and more rigid formalism, Mill shook off the fetters of the scholastic logicians. He maintained that the syllogism involved a *petitio principii*; and in the emphasis which he laid upon "things" and "real kinds," he showed his conviction that reasoning *in vacuo* was likely to prove misleading.

It was, however, in the books devoted to induction that Mill was most original. Little had been done since the time of Bacon towards a theory of scientific method; but the rapid accumulation of the material of science rendered some effort to this end necessary. The attempt was made several times within a few years. Scattered through Sir John Herschel's writings are many reflections on method; and in his treatise *On the Study of Natural Philosophy* (1830) he discusses the question systematically. A little later William Whewell (1794–1866) did so again on a far more ambitious scale. Whewell was specially well informed about the history of science. He embodied his knowledge in his *History of the Inductive Sciences* (1837), which was followed by the *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (1840). Perhaps he is most widely known by his *Novum Organum Renovatum*, which was the second part of the *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*.

Mill's theory of induction therefore was not without rivals; and though on the whole it deserved the success it has won over them, in two important respects the work of Whewell is superior. In the first place, Whewell's richer knowledge of the history of science enabled him to illustrate more copiously and more suggestively. Secondly, in respect of the fundamental principle of his philosophy, Whewell appears to be nearer the truth than Mill. The philosophy of the latter was wholly empirical: in the second book of the *Logic* he even maintains that the axioms of geometry are generalisations from observation. And to Mill experience meant something which came to the mind from without, something in the reception of which the mind was passive. His was, in short, the empiricism of Hume. Whewell maintained, on the other hand, that besides empirical truth we must recognise necessary truth. The distinction, as he drew it, was crude, and his doctrine far too much resembled the untenable theory of innate ideas, or the "common sense" of the Scottish philosophy; but nevertheless he was right in the conviction, which pervades all his philosophical treatises and runs through his controversy with Mill, that pure empiricism is impotent. Kant's *reductio ad absurdum* of the principles adopted by Hume from Locke remains unanswered.

On the other hand, in the details of his inductive theory Whewell is deplorably vague. Induction as conceived by him is nothing more than hypothesis subjected to certain tests. This might be satisfactory enough, provided the tests were at once sufficient and generally applicable. Unfortunately for Whewell they are not. The test of prediction is certainly insufficient; and the test of consilience is as certainly inapplicable in the great majority of cases. Mill's theory has the advantage of being more definite and more adequate. But it is only a relative superiority that can be granted to him. Few of the men of science acknowledge any debt to the canons; they have been severely damaged by the critical examination of logicians like Mr Bradley; and even the most cursory reader must be struck by the immense gulf between the canons and some of the instances—especially under the method of agreement—which are supposed to exemplify them.

It is impossible to acquit Mill of a slovenly and dangerous looseness of reasoning in this section of his work.

In view of the strongly practical bent of Mill's mind it would hardly be surprising to discover that his talent for abstract speculation fell short of the standard of greatness; and there are several indications in the *System of Logic* that this was the case. A comparatively small but nevertheless significant indication in the chapter "Of Names" is the doctrine of non-connotative terms. It is scarcely credible that a man with the metaphysical instinct would have confused thus between the etymological meaning and the actual significance of proper names, or have failed to discover that it is just because they are more deeply connotative than class names, that proper names can subserve their purpose. A far more important point is Mill's absolute severance of "things" from "thought." German idealism long ago demonstrated the impossibility of maintaining such complete separation; and the latest scientific theories about the nature of matter powerfully support the idealistic criticism.

Mill's conception of the two laws of uniformity of nature and universal causation betrays the same deficiency. On the one hand, we are asked to regard them as the foundation of all scientific induction; on the other hand, we are told that they are themselves the outcome of induction,—necessarily of unscientific, and presumably therefore of insecure, induction. Mill never penetrates down to the question, what would human experience be if these laws and all principles of relation were eliminated? In point of fact, there would be no experience at all; the isolated, independent, self-existent "idea" or "impression" is a mere figment. But probably the most convincing proof of Mill's weakness on the metaphysical side may be found in his treatment of the law of causation. He sees the inadequacy of Hume's definition of cause. A mere invariable antecedent does not answer to our conception of cause; for night is the invariable antecedent, but it is assuredly not the cause, of day. Instead, however, of abandoning Hume's definition, Mill proceeds to tinker it, and re-defines cause as the invariable and *unconditional* antecedent. Thus, day follows upon night only on condition that the sun rises, and not night but the

rise of the sun is the condition invariably and unconditionally antecedent to the effect, day. Good and well; but Mill does not comprehend the full effect of his own alteration; which is no less than the substitution for the sensationalism of Hume of some kind of intellectual conception of an ordered universe. There is no room for an "unconditional" in pure empiricism. In improving Hume Mill has unconsciously but completely shifted his ground. This is one of a number of cases, and perhaps the most important, in which we find side by side in Mill's system, unexplained and unharmonised, elements of the diverse influences through which his mind passed.

At the time when the *Logic* was nearing completion, Mill was under the sway of Comte, and it became his ambition to formulate a science of sociology. To this, however, he conceived a necessary preliminary to be a science of ethology, or the formation of character; a subject to which he devotes a chapter in the sixth book of the *Logic*. Baffled in the attempt to formulate such a science, he fell back upon political economy as a *pis aller*. He had already paid a good deal of attention to the subject. As early as 1830–31 the five *Essays on some Unsettled Questions in Political Economy* were written, though it was not till 1844, after the success of the *Logic* was assured, that they were published. Once free from the toil of the *Logic*, and convinced that, for him at least, the science of ethology was unattainable, Mill turned all his powers to economics; and the fruit of his labour was the *Principles of Political Economy*. Here again, more obviously though not more really than in the *Logic*, Mill was obeying his instinct for practice. The development of commerce was no less characteristic of the age than the advance of science; and a theory of commerce was as much a need of the time as an organon of science. Mill accordingly set himself to fill the gaps in the theories of Adam Smith and Ricardo, to supply what time had shown to be lacking, and above all to enquire how the principles he had reached might be brought to bear on society with practical effect. Essentially, Mill is a disciple of Ricardo; but he is more human than Ricardo, and the Ricardian laws frequently gain in truth while they lose in rigidity under Mill's handling. He himself was most interested

in those parts of his work which were in a strictly scientific sense extra-economical; and in none more than in the chapter on the probable future of the labouring classes[1]. Here he applied that Malthusian doctrine which had so profoundly interested him, in a way directly opposite to that in which the author of the doctrine had used it. For while Malthus originally advanced it to prove the unsoundness of ideas such as Godwin's concerning the boundless possibilities of human improvement, Mill sought to show that the understanding of the law, the acceptance of it, and a voluntary restriction of numbers, gave to the working classes the one chance of a general and permanent elevation of their position.

The *Principles of Political Economy* is a far less original book than the *Logic*. The leading ideas are accepted by Mill from his predecessors, and scarcely anything is wholly his own. Within the stricter limits of the science, probably his most original contribution was the theory of foreign exchanges; and even that is the development of ideas to be found in Ricardo. Mill's great merits as an economist are, not originality, but lucidity of expression and copiousness of illustration. He explains with a fulness which occasionally borders upon verbosity; but the impatience which he now and then excites is checked by the reflection that at any rate he has made it almost impossible to misapprehend the meaning. He is less abstract than his master Ricardo, and sometimes—particularly in his theory of rent—while accepting the Ricardian doctrine in substance, introduces modifications or qualifications suggested by actual experience. But in this department too there is occasionally a certain incongruity between the abstract theory which Mill advocates and the concrete experience with which he illustrates it.

The period of Mill's predominance in philosophy is also the golden age of the classical school of political economy: soon after his death the credit of the science began to decay. The high position which it then held was due in part to Mill's own influence; but in far larger measure it was the result of the circumstances of the time. The great development of commerce was in mid

[1] This chapter was an addition suggested, Mill tells us, by his guide and counsellor, Mrs Taylor.

career; machinery was transforming the conditions of industry; railways and steamships were working a revolution in the conditions of transport; the capitalist class ruled; the great political question of the time was an economic one. And after the triumph of free trade, men were for many years content to utter jubilations and to refer the whole growth of wealth to it, oblivious of the fact that those engines and railways and steamships might have something to do with it too. Mill himself seems to stand, half consciously, at the parting of the ways. With one hand he is linked to Ricardo and that political economy which dictated "laws of nature" with the confidence of a Newton. But Mill was never quite contented with the "economic man," never satisfied to regard the getting of wealth as in itself a sufficient end of human life; and so with the other hand he seems to reach out towards the historical and *a posteriori* school of economics. He never follows its methods, but its rise might almost be prophesied from his writings.

After the publication of the *Political Economy*, there is a long blank in Mill's literary history. For eleven years he published no independent work; and even his contributions to periodicals were far less frequent than of old. The cause was partly a loss of health, which may be attributed to over-strain; while in the latter part of the period a contributory cause was the worry of his official work at the India Office, increased as it was by the Mutiny and preparations for the transference of the administration from the Company to the Crown. Upon that event Mill retired; and from 1858 onwards, except for the three years of his parliamentary life, he was free to devote himself to literature and philosophy.

The result of Mill's freedom is seen immediately in the record of his literary work. *Liberty* and *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform* both appeared in 1859, *Representative Government* two years later, and *Utilitarianism* after another interval of two years. Then, after the books on Comte and Hamilton, came *The Subjection of Women* (1869), the last work published during Mill's life. After his death, besides the *Autobiography*, there appeared three *Essays on Religion* and *Chapters on Socialism*, all that he had been able to do of a projected book on socialism.

Of these works the most important as a contribution to

philosophy is *Utilitarianism*, the only one of Mill's works which is devoted to ethics. It is one of the best books in which to study the history of Mill's mind. The core of it is Benthamism; but round that core cluster the accretions Mill had gathered in his course through the world. The consequence is that Mill's theory is ethically far richer than Bentham's; but on the other hand it is far less simple and far less consistent. The greatest point of difference between him and his master lies in Mill's contention that pleasures differ from one another in quality as well as in quantity. Bentham denied any difference but a quantitative one, and thus greatly simplified the "calculus of pleasures." "The greatest happiness of the greatest number" was a thing which (apparently at least) could be estimated without undue difficulty. But in Mill the idea of "happiness" is sublimated. It becomes doubtful whether it can be identified with pleasurable sensation at all; and at any rate Mill cannot bring himself to maintain that the highest intellectual pleasure, or the pleasure of the philanthropist in an act of benevolence, is the same in kind with that derived from the grossest indulgence of sensual appetite. But if there are differences in kind among pleasures, how are they to be reduced to a common measure?

Though Mill's mental receptiveness led to the introduction into his system of elements of thought whose right to stand there may well be disputed, it was nevertheless to this receptiveness, and perhaps even to the presence of these incongruities, that he owed great part of his influence. This aspect of his intellectual character is well illustrated by his relations with Comte. Mill had been largely instrumental in making the French philosopher known in England. Already in 1830 he had been attracted by the early writings of Comte, and when the Positive Philosophy came into being he was powerfully influenced by the social system there expounded, and made generous acknowledgment of his obligations. For some years before and after the publication of the *Logic* Mill was in close correspondence with Comte; but he found the connexion as troublesome as Hume had found the friendship of Rousseau, and the two philosophers became estranged. Long before he wrote the book on Comte Mill's view of the philosophy

as well as of the philosopher had changed. He was no longer moved by the chivalrous desire, which at first he felt, to say all that could be said in favour of a neglected thinker. The English Positivists were now a body, not indeed large in numbers, but wielding a considerable influence. Further, Mill had grown increasingly conscious of certain differences between Comtism and the system which underlay all his own thought. Lord Morley has called Comtism simply "Utilitarianism crowned by a fantastic decoration," and Edmond Scherer remarks that in passing from Bentham to Comte Mill was "merely following the course of utilitarian ideas to the point where they debouch and lose themselves in a vaster system." But notwithstanding this affinity, the author of *Liberty* could hardly be at ease within the limits of the system which Huxley, condensing Comte's own words, described as "Catholicism *minus* Christianity,"—*i.e.* a system destitute of Catholic dogma, but based upon an ultra-Catholic organisation. Mill, in fact, was gradually driven to recognise the existence of incongruous elements in his own scheme. He was hopeful of the results of social organisation, and he was attracted by economic socialism. Yet on the other hand he was an economist of the school of Adam Smith and Ricardo, and he set an almost immeasurable value upon the freedom of the individual. Naturally, therefore, as he became conscious of the degree in which Comtism threatened what he valued so highly, Mill was impelled to point out what he considered the defects, as well as the merits, of the system, and its insufficiency for that regeneration of society which he valued above all things.

The examination of Hamilton, which is much more elaborate than that of Comte[1] and a more profound piece of philosophy, was also in a manner forced upon Mill. Hamilton's philosophy ranked in England as the great rival system to Utilitarianism, and, for reasons noted in connexion with Mansel, Mill thought its influence highly prejudicial. Therefore, unwilling though he was to give himself the appearance of disparaging a man no longer living, Mill, in obedience to his practical instinct, put all his force into the examination of the rival school, and especially of

[1] It preceded the articles on Comte.

Hamilton's cardinal doctrine, the philosophy of the conditioned. What chiefly roused Mill's dislike was the essentially negative and destructive character of this philosophy, and it is interesting to find the "atheist" and disciple of the sceptic Hume here taking up arms in defence of faith against its own defenders. But it would be a mistake to regard the *Examination of Hamilton* as purely critical. It contains not only Mill's refutation of Hamiltonianism, but also a great deal of positive doctrine not to be found elsewhere. Indeed, after the *System of Logic*, the *Examination of Hamilton* is the book by which Mill can be most adequately judged, and the fact that it is not usually so regarded is to be explained by its critical character. Its very success tended to its own eclipse: people are slow to interest themselves in criticisms of philosophy, and above all of philosophies which have no longer any vitality.

All Mill's works which have not hitherto been noticed are, in different ways and degrees, political. Those which deal with the machinery of government—even the important volume on *Representative Government*—have in great measure lost their interest. But the value of *Liberty* is permanent, and *The Subjection of Women*, though much inferior, is inspired with the same spirit. The theme of the latter book is just a special case of that dealt with in the earlier. *On Liberty* discusses the rights of the individual generally; *The Subjection of Women* is an impassioned plea for the enfranchisement of one sex from the domination of the other; and if the passion at times exceeds measure, the fault is more than redeemed by the generous spirit of the book.

In the volume *On Liberty* too Mill is profoundly in earnest. Nothing roused him to fiercer wrath than an infringement of liberty, whether it was in the name of the sovereign or of the mob, of religion or of law. His readiness to champion the cause of a negro, or to denounce an act of judicial oppression, was in keeping with his whole history; but his anxious care for the rights of minorities shows that he was equally alive to the dangers which might threaten individual liberty in a democracy. Mill's *Liberty* is in more respects than one a landmark. It is among the last and the best statements of the principles of

individualism[1], and a comparison between it and political writings of the present day, even by those who do not profess socialism, affords a measure of the distance traversed by thought within the last half century. Mill himself had taken tints, it is true, from socialism; but Benthamism is fundamentally individualistic, and *Liberty* proves that the later influences upon Mill were superficial compared with those which governed his youth. He insists strongly upon the great importance of allowing the free development of the greatest possible variety of characters; and though he would have given more scope to government than the Manchester school was disposed to concede, he held that the burden of proof always lay upon those who advocated interference with the individual.

In another respect too this book marks the end of an epoch. Published in the same year with the *Origin of Species*, it is conspicuous, as are all Mill's works, for the total absence of the sense of heredity. The individual stands in a certain environment, but we are not taught to regard him as having been made what he is by the generations which have gone before. Had he taken this view Mill must of necessity have modified his individualism. Not only so, but he must have revised the fundamental principles of his philosophy. Perhaps the gravest defect which in the present day strikes the student of the Utilitarian philosophy from Bentham to Mill is the complete failure of its adherents to assimilate the greatest constructive idea of the nineteenth century, that of evolution. Bentham himself was too early for it; but his disciples lived within its influence. Hegel, Comte and Herbert Spencer in philosophy, Lamarck, Lyell and Darwin in science, all live and breathe in this atmosphere. The idea had been applied to the physical structure of the earth, to animal life, to human society; but notwithstanding all this, the Utilitarians remain unconscious and unmoved. Their work has in consequence suffered in other fields as well as in philosophy. If Grote had been able to apply the idea of evolution to history, he would never have fallen into the blunder of treating ancient democracy as a thing on the same plane with modern democracy. There is no other line of cleavage

[1] Herbert Spencer's *The Man* versus *the State* (1884) is however far more individualistic.

in modern thought so deep as this. Philosophies in which the idea of evolution reigns have still some message to the present; those which have it not belong to the past.

In the future Mill will probably rank as a thinker somewhat lower than he stood in the estimation of his contemporaries; but after all deductions have been made he remains upon the whole the greatest English publicist since Burke. He has neither the weight of thought, nor the sweep of imagination, nor the fervour of eloquence of the great Irishman; but through his whole life he devoted himself with unwearied earnestness to public questions; and he treated them with a largeness of spirit which no contemporary and no successor has equalled.

Notable among the younger contemporaries of Mill who worked upon the theory of Utilitarianism was Alexander Bain (1818–1903), perhaps the best of all illustrations of the "reasoning machine," at once in its power and in its weakness. Strength of spirit and of intellect he undoubtedly possessed; otherwise, he could never have made his way against the difficulties which beset his youth; nor could he have been, as he was for many years, the weightiest man in the University of Aberdeen. Neither is it possible to read his works without perceiving that he was gifted with a singular clearness of mind. *The Senses and the Intellect* (1855) and *The Emotions and the Will* (1859) are lucid as well as solid contributions to Utilitarian psychology. There was no mist about the things Bain saw. On the other hand, there were many things which he did not see at all. Few books are more arid than Bain's *Autobiography*; the reader travels through a dry parched land. Yet it is valuable, because it gives the key to Bain's philosophy. We discover that it is highly personal, that the system in its hardness and dryness exactly reflects the hardness and dryness of the philosopher's mind. There were, however, other qualities as well in Bain's mind. The *Autobiography* bears witness to an inflexible integrity, which also inspires the philosophy. No man of the time sought truth with more perfect singleness of mind, no one was more courageously ready to suffer for it if need were. It cannot be said that Bain made any great original contribution to Utilitarianism; but he did sound work in detail. His

knowledge of science especially was valuable, because it enabled him to fill gaps left by Mill.

Among the names of those who in later days have, with more or less divergence and originality followed Mill, there is none more honoured or more honourable than that of Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900), a disciple who in the three great works of his life showed the same mixture of speculative with practical interests, and the same devotion to the former for the sake of the latter, as Mill himself. Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics* (1874) is an attempt to restate the philosophic principles of Utilitarianism in the light of criticism and reflection. So too the *Principles of Political Economy* (1883) starts from the work which Mill had published just a generation before, but at the same time shows very clearly the influence of that spirit of scepticism which declined any longer to accept the "laws" of political economy as conceptions in the same category with the law of gravitation. And, finally, the *Elements of Politics* (1891) indicates the persistence in the disciple of that practical interest in government which had been characteristic of the whole Utilitarian school.

While, however, Mill was deliberately trained in abstract thought, Sidgwick rather drifted into philosophy. His first studies were classical, and his earliest academical employment was a classical lectureship. It was his membership of the Society of the Apostles which revealed Sidgwick to himself, convinced him that the true bent of his mind was towards the investigation of the ultimate problems of life, and made him one of the earliest workers in the newly created tripos of moral science at Cambridge. His classical lectureship was exchanged for a lectureship in moral philosophy in 1869, and ultimately, in 1883, he became professor of that subject in his own university. And Sidgwick did not reach this position without passing through that period of stress and doubt which few of his contemporaries escaped. He was a man of strong religious instincts, reared in the atmosphere of orthodoxy, but in days when orthodoxy was becoming less and less credible to the thoughtful. The reading of Renan's *Études d'Histoire Religieuse* in 1862 powerfully influenced Sidgwick's mind. He turned to the study of Arabic and Hebrew for a solution

of the questions which had been thus suggested to him, and persevered in it for more than two years. Ultimately, however, he abandoned this line of enquiry, mainly because he became convinced that the most complete mastery of these languages would qualify him only for the investigation of secondary problems. The key to the problem lay, he believed, in philosophy, not in linguistic science. The trend of his thought was clearly shown by his resignation of his Trinity fellowship in 1869, a step which he felt called upon to take because of the change which had passed over his opinions since he had made the declaration which was the condition of his admission to the fellowship. The resignation was characteristic in two ways, characteristic in the steadiness and caution with which he paused to see whether there might possibly be any swing backwards towards his former position, and characteristic too in the scrupulous honour with which, having convinced himself that there could be none, he faced all the consequences of his own views.

This beautiful sincerity is the most striking feature in the character of Sidgwick, and it is the root-principle of his whole method of philosophising. No one gave himself more wholeheartedly to the pursuit of truth, no one more courageously accepted unwelcome conclusions. He was repelled by the negative aspect of the philosophy of Mill, and so far as he accepted Mill as a guide, it was because he believed himself to find in him a larger portion of the truth than in any other. But he always estimated highly the value of positive beliefs for practical life. His conviction of the importance of the belief in immortality induced him to become one of the founders of the society for psychical research; his rigorous conception of the character of the evidence required made him dubious about most of the results; and, eager as he was for a positive answer, he describes himself in 1887 as drifting steadily to the conclusion that we have not and are never likely to have empirical evidence of the existence of the individual after death[1].

This same characteristic is at once the strength of Sidgwick's philosophy and, in a sense, its weakness. It is a source of

[1] *Life*, 466.

weakness in so far as he is never likely to be as popular or as widely influential as a man more dogmatic would be. He habitually pauses and balances, sometimes even when he is hardly in doubt, just from a caution almost in excess. And this native tendency was strengthened by the sense that the philosophy at which he had arrived was not that which he would have chosen to teach had the choice been his. But it was not his choice, it was intellectual constraint. The truth as he saw it was not the truth as he wished it to be. In a remarkable passage in his journal at the close of 1884 he contrasts himself with T. H. Green, the meagre numbers whom he influenced with the many who bore the stamp of Green; and he adds what we may be sure is at least part of the explanation. "Feeling," he says, "that the deepest truth I have to tell is by no means 'good tidings,' I naturally shrink from exercising on others the personal influence which would make men [resemble] me, as much as men more optimistic and prophetic naturally aim at exercising such influence[1]." Cautious, then, by nature and from a sense of duty, and rendered still more cautious by the doubt whether what he had to teach would be practically inspiring and elevating, Sidgwick habitually expresses himself in such a way as to blur the outlines of his thought, to give a sense of inconclusiveness, and to alienate the reader who longs for decision and definiteness. But the conclusions he does reach are all the more impressive on this account, and the fact that his allegiance was given on the whole to the Utilitarian school (modified though it is in his case by elements of intuitionalism) is an indication of the continued vitality of that philosophy; and it may well be that if Sidgwick had not felt himself hampered as he did, in the days after the death of Mill, the battle might not have gone as decidedly as it seemed to go in favour of the idealists.

The thinkers who were most powerfully influenced by the idea of evolution may be most conveniently classified by the countries from which they drew their inspiration. Both the Utilitarians and the Scottish philosophers worked upon native materials, but

[1] *Life*, 395.

some of the evolutionists were inspired by France, others by Germany, while yet a third group were essentially English.

It will be most convenient to discuss first the Anglo-French school, for it reached maturity earlier than the others, it was most closely akin to the school last reviewed, and it made the smallest breach with the older systems of thought. There is, indeed, truth in the criticisms already quoted from Scherer and Lord Morley; but the evolutionary conception must not be ignored. The law of the three stages is evidently evolutionary, and if this aspect of it had been made prominent it would have been of vast importance. Unfortunately, the significance of the law as an evolutionary doctrine did not come home to the English Positivists, nor even fully to Comte himself; and though it was this vivifying conception of history which attracted the disciples, both they and their master went astray after that very strange god, the "fantastic decoration." Comte himself was to blame, partly because of the decoration, and partly for a deficiency in expression almost unparalleled among Frenchmen. The fact that Harriet Martineau's paraphrase of the thought—for it is not a translation of the words—of Comte has been rendered into French, and has become one of the principal means by which Comte's own countrymen acquire a knowledge of his system, is at once one of the most emphatic compliments ever paid to such a performance, and one of the most trenchant criticisms ever passed upon the writings of a great man.

Mill's partial discipleship to Comte has been already spoken of; but Mill could not at any time be reckoned as an unqualified Comtist. Among those who may be fairly described as Positivists, not more than four require notice here. They are George Henry Lewes, George Eliot, Harriet Martineau and Richard Congreve.

Richard Congreve (1818–1899) claims the first place, not as the earliest English Comtist, but as the founder of the Positivist community in London. Comte's works are said to have been first introduced into England in 1837, and Mill certainly read them shortly after that date. A visit to Paris in 1848, during which he met the great philosopher himself, converted Congreve,

and convinced him so thoroughly that in 1855 he resigned the fellowship he held at Wadham College, Oxford, in order to devote himself to the Positivist religion. Congreve, as his edition of Aristotle's *Politics* shows, was an excellent scholar, as well as a man of great gifts, and the group which gathered round him included a considerable number of the most talented men then living in England. Soon, however, the cult of Humanity, instead of spreading, began to lose ground, for the sober English mind was alienated by its artificiality.

None of the other three was absorbed in Positivism as Congreve was. George Eliot had her own creative work to do, and Lewes and Harriet Martineau were both persons of singularly varied activity. George Henry Lewes (1817–1878) was, indeed, one of the most versatile men of his time. He did so many things that nothing he attempted could astonish those who knew him; and Thackeray expressed a general feeling when he declared that he would not be surprised to see Lewes riding down Piccadilly on a white elephant. But the suggestion of mere meaningless eccentricity has to be corrected. The versatility of Lewes was the outcome of an exceedingly active intellect, continually on the watch for new ideas and seeking new openings for its energy. Thus he was at once novelist, dramatist, critic, biographer, philosopher and man of science. If he did not attain a high position in all, he reached at least a respectable one, and in biography something a good deal beyond that. The biographical part is the best element in the *Biographical History of Philosophy* (1845–1846); and the *Life of Goethe* is an extraordinarily able delineation of one of the most complex of literary figures.

A man so alert as Lewes was naturally one of the first in England to master the ideas of Comte; and, with the exception of Mill, he was the first who made any serious attempt to introduce those ideas to his countrymen. The *Cours de Philosophie Positive* was completed in 1842; and already in the *Biographical History of Philosophy* Lewes is a convinced disciple, and a warm advocate of the system of Comte. The book is a stimulating and interesting one, bright and lucid, rather than weighty and profound. The standpoint of the Positivist was not the best for

a historian of philosophy. It is notorious that Comte regarded the metaphysical stage as merely a time of transition between the effete theological period and that positive stage towards which humanity was moving. Fully accepting this view, and the definition of metaphysics as merely "the art of amusing oneself with method," Lewes was obviously not particularly well qualified to appreciate the metaphysicians, and it is not surprising that his treatment of them is superficial.

Lewes remained faithful all his life to the Positivist principles. In *Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences* (1853) he devoted himself exclusively to the explication of the system; and in the last philosophical work published during his life, *Problems of Life and Mind* (1874–1879), he shows himself still an ardent Positivist. In his capacity of advocate his gifts told and his defects were unnoticed; so that though he was rather a clever popular expositor than a profound original thinker, no one did more to establish Comtism in England.

Notwithstanding the fantastic character of the "decoration," the fact that Comte's system is at once a philosophy and a religion made it attractive to a certain class of minds which would have been comparatively indifferent to a mere philosophy. For it is an attempt to satisfy the two-fold need of human nature, and to shun at once the pitfall whereinto the Catholic Church had fallen, and the opposite error of the pure rationalists. The balance between intellect and feeling is redressed in the Religion of Humanity, wherein each finds a place,—Feeling as the superior, Intellect as the subordinate, but a subordinate with rights and a fixed position in the scheme of things.

Obviously such a system must have been attractive to souls torn asunder in the conflict between the head and the heart. The fact is significant that two of the most conspicuous among the early English Positivists were women; and though Harriet Martineau was of a somewhat masculine type of mind, George Eliot was feminine to the core. They, like many others, wished at once to be true to their reason and to find an object of worship. Perhaps they were not inclined to enquire very closely how far Humanity, with a big H, was such an object. The disintegrating

forces of modern thought were at work on the old beliefs, and some substitute was imperiously demanded.

It was not Lewes alone, it was also the force of a kind of natural selection which impelled George Eliot towards Positivism. She stands on a wholly different plane from the other two. We may quite justly and fairly label and ticket them "Positivists"; but we cannot do so in her case. They were primarily philosophical, she was artistic. They were people of talent; she, a woman of genius. Positivism was the air they breathed; it was but an odour in her ampler atmosphere. On that very account its presence there is peculiarly interesting. The history of the spiritual struggles of Mary Ann Evans must be traced elsewhere—the orthodoxy of her early years—the Unitarian influence—the sway of German biblical criticism—the connexion with Lewes, and the importation into her mind of the element of Positivism. We see throughout the working of two contrasted sides of her character. On the one hand is an intellect of the most masculine strength, on the other, a sensibility even tremulously feminine; on the one hand, a resolute will to probe life and the universe to their depths, on the other, a yearning wish to discover after all that the old faith was true. The translator of the *Leben Jesu* found comfort at her work in looking at a crucifix which she had fixed over her desk. To such a soul, Positivism was, not perhaps absolutely satisfying, but at any rate more comforting than any other system of philosophy. Philosophical she was bound to be, her intellect demanded it: her emotions imperiously called for a religion. The double demand was more nearly satisfied by the system of Comte than by any other.

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876), whose useful and able paraphrase and condensation of the Comtist philosophy gives her an important place in the history of Positivism in England, came of a Unitarian family; and her younger brother, James Martineau, was, throughout his long life, the just pride and the ornament of the sect to which he belonged. Norwich, their place of abode, was, in the end of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries, the seat of one of those local literary coteries which had not yet been completely swallowed up in London.

It was also the seat of a better known and a far greater school of art. Of the literary coterie the principal figure was William Taylor; and Mrs Barbauld and her niece Lucy Aikin, persons who were then considered by no means insignificant, were drawn thither as occasional visitors. Thus Miss Martineau grew up in an atmosphere wherein literature disputed the pre-eminence with commerce, and under influences which set her in opposition to the prevailing creed of the country. Such influences generally, to the credit of human nature, produce an intense loyalty to the small, and frequently the despised and contemned sect. In the case of Harriet Martineau (for reasons not at all to her discredit) they had the opposite effect. The fact that she was in opposition to the majority of her contemporaries led her to examine the ground upon which she stood. In consequence, doubt succeeded doubt; but the spiritual effect was not that which the process would have had on many masculine and on nearly all feminine minds. There is a ring of jubilation in her record of the final issue. "At length," she says, "I recognised the monstrous superstition [she means Christianity] in its true character of a great fact in the history of the race, and found myself, with the last link of my chain snapped,—a free rover on the broad, bright, breezy common of the universe[1]."

But even for a Harriet Martineau the "breezy common of the universe" proved a little cold and comfortless. There is ample evidence that, in spite of the masculine strain in her intellect, she had the clinging feminine nature too. If she could not find much of a God in heaven, she was skilful in fashioning gods on earth,—and also demons, for she had many pet aversions. Now mesmerism, which had cured her physical ailments, was the object of worship; now it was the wonderful Mr Atkinson, whose somewhat ordinary intellect, seen through the vapours of her imagination (not the brightest of her faculties), was magnified to gigantic proportions and clothed in the splendours of the rainbow. What could be more natural than for a person like Miss Martineau to turn for comfort to a philosophy which was also a religion?

[1] *Autobiography*, i. 116.

Miss Martineau did so with a zeal sufficient to carry her through her toilsome task of translation and condensation, which was completed in 1853. The place given to emotion, the idea of service to humanity as a duty, the insistence upon unity in the world and in human nature,—in a word the religious spirit of the Comtian philosophy, was the thing which made the "breezy common of the universe" more home-like and habitable.

An interesting but not an attractive personality is that of Harriet Martineau. "Dogmatic," "hasty," "imperious," W. R. Greg has called her; and the adjectives are well chosen. The judgments upon contemporaries recorded in the *Autobiography* bear that stamp; and they are moreover as a rule uninstructive and shallow. Nevertheless, Miss Martineau compels respect by reason of her force, her earnestness, her indomitable activity and her dauntless courage. Further, she could at times turn a very different face to the world. A lady so tender and pious as Caroline Fox praises *Deerbrook* (the best of Miss Martineau's stories—so admirably constructed out of commonplace materials) as "a brave book," and one which "inspires trust and love, faith in its fulness, resignation in its meekness." Surprising as these words are with reference to a book by Harriet Martineau, they are aptly applied to *Deerbrook*. On a first impression it is not less surprising to learn that she was a sufferer for a book which was judged to be too favourable to the Catholics. Dickens declined her story, *The Missionary*, for *Household Words*, because he objected to publishing anything in their favour.

Miss Martineau's literary career was an active and prolific one. Besides the books already mentioned, she wrote several works of fiction, numerous tales illustrative of political economy, several books and pamphlets on questions of government and economics, two works on the history of England during the period of her own life, a number of volumes on miscellaneous subjects, and an ambitious but not profound work on *Eastern Life, Present and Past* (1848), the purpose of which was to illustrate the origin and rise of the Egyptian, Hebrew, Christian and Mohammedan faiths. Perhaps the most interesting of all these works are the *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832–1834). They are

a collection of tales illustrating the principal doctrines of political economy as they were then understood. Miss Martineau was led to form the plan of this work by the discovery that in certain earlier tales which she had written she had been unconsciously teaching political economy. She claims that in the *Illustrations* she has sacrificed no principle of economics to the exigencies of the story. The claim appears to be well founded; and the method has the advantage of vividness. The tales were an effective means of popularising the outlines of political economy, and they might still be read with advantage. At the same time, there are inevitable disadvantages in this way of illustrating a science by means of fiction. The systematic development suffers; and in spite of the summary of principles illustrated, some of these are necessarily in danger of being lost in the story.

Highly gifted as she was, Harriet Martineau lacked the crowning gift of genius, and had she not linked her own with a greater name she might be in danger of oblivion. But her *Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte* is a great work, and, for the reason already indicated, it has no small share of originality. She is no mere translator, but an interpreter at the same time.

The other evolutionary school of foreign parentage has exercised a far profounder influence than the Comtists upon English thought, principally because it has been in touch with a far more vitalising form of the doctrine. Tracing descent from Hegel, and in the farther past from Kant, it has been borne along by the most powerful current of modern thought and it has done a great work in familiarising England with that thought.

Attention has already been called to the extraordinary way in which Mill, Hamilton and their contemporaries missed the real significance of German speculation. In spite of the work of Coleridge and Carlyle, and of the ardent discipleship of Maurice and Sterling, there was still little systematic knowledge of German philosophy and scanty infiltration of its principles into English speculation. It was the English Hegelians who completed the work which Coleridge and Carlyle had begun, and by means of German thought potently swayed the minds of a generation of Englishmen; for even those who have not been disciples have

been to some degree moulded by their influence. Probably never before has a foreign philosophy (Greek philosophy excepted) been so powerful over England. English Hegelianism was later in developing than the other schools, and the works in which it is embodied are of comparatively recent date. In earlier days it gave a point of view and supplied principles for teaching, but it was rarely reduced to writing. The importance of that point of view and of those principles can be correctly estimated only by those who have been trained first under a system which had them not, and then under that which gave them. Many still alive have had that experience, and they can testify that the result has been nothing less than an intellectual new birth.

On the threshold it may be well to notice briefly a philosopher who can be identified with no school and who left no followers, but whom it would be unjust to ignore. The literary connexions of James Frederick Ferrier (1808–1864) are interesting. A nephew of Miss Ferrier the novelist and of Christopher North, he had by birth the right of entry into the literary society of Edinburgh. He was too late, however, to see much of its brightest ornament, Scott. From the first, Ferrier's interest centred in philosophy; and, though it was not till 1854 that he published his *Institutes of Metaphysic*, he had long before drawn the attention of the thoughtful by his philosophical essays. One of the things which Emerson in 1844 enjoins Carlyle "not to forget," is to send information about the author of the essay on consciousness in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

Ferrier, with a touch of patriotic prejudice, described his philosophy as "Scottish to the core"; but, happily for his fame, the accuracy of the description must be challenged, if it means that he is in the direct line of descent from Reid and Stewart, and is an exponent of the philosophy of common sense. That he certainly is not. Among British thinkers, Ferrier has most in common with Berkeley; for his theory is a form of subjective idealism. But it is Berkeley read in the light of a later day, crossed with German thought and remoulded in Ferrier's own mind; so that if by the phrase "Scottish to the core," Ferrier meant to claim that his philosophy was essentially original, the claim is

well founded. There are elements in him not only of Berkeley, but of Spinoza, of Kant and of Hegel. But Ferrier was far too powerful merely to reproduce the thought of another man. Nothing passes unchanged through the alembic of his mind. Further, there was an originality even in his borrowings from the Germans. He was perhaps the first of the professional philosophers to enter into the spirit of German thought; and the *Institutes of Metaphysic* is the earliest systematic work into which that spirit largely enters. The difference between Ferrier's manner of dealing with it and that of Brown or of Hamilton, is a striking indication of the way in which thought was moving.

Ferrier had perhaps a finer gift for metaphysical speculation than any man of his time. This was his distinctive sphere; and it is largely for this reason that he is so much less known and has been so much less influential than other men who were certainly not his superiors in genius for speculation. No British thinker has had less than Ferrier of that practical instinct which has been noticed in Mill. Pure Being was a conception not too abstract for him, and he was content to breathe that rarefied air not merely for a moment but always. Such a devotion to unpractical conceptions is a thing which England does not readily forgive; and for that reason this bold, subtle and original thinker, in spite of the brilliancy of his style, has been recognised by and has been influential over only a handful of specialists.

The English Hegelians had their home originally at Oxford, where the most influential of them was Jowett, some aspects of whose work have been noticed already in the chapter on the theologians. In thought, Jowett was an eclectic. At no period of his life was he disposed to bind himself to any party, creed or faction in philosophy, and least of all in the later stages, when his aversion from dogmatic systems became exaggerated to a fault. But though he would have objected to being called a Hegelian, it was the background of Hegelian and Kantian thought which gave life to his teaching, which made his commentaries on Thessalonians, Galatians and Romans stimulating when they first appeared, and which gave pregnancy to his introductions to Plato. And for a long time Hegelianism had a most powerful

hold upon Jowett. In 1845 he writes to a friend with reference to his study of Hegel: "One must go on or perish in the attempt, that is to say, give up Metaphysics altogether. It is impossible to be satisfied with any other system after you have begun with this[1]."

Jowett's most important work, the translation of the *Dialogues of Plato* (1871), has been subjected to a good deal of rather carping criticism, the main outcome of which is that it is not ideally well-adapted for the purposes of a "crib." The sufficient answer is that Jowett never meant it for that purpose, and that it is something far greater, a noble rendering for the English reader of one of the greatest writers of antiquity. There have been many men superior to Jowett in minute accuracy of scholarship; but if there have been any superior to him in the power to reproduce the meaning of a great author, they have unfortunately hidden their light. We could spare many discussions on points of grammar and verbal criticism for a few more renderings such as that of the *Dialogues of Plato*. Thanks to Jowett, Plato is a classic of the English language as well as of the Greek; and whatever may happen to the study of Greek, his fame and influence are secure as long as the English language lives. Taking the translation and the introductions together, with their charm of style and their mass of suggestive thought, this work may fairly be ranked as one of the greatest contributions to English speculation.

The translation was not Jowett's only service to the memory of Plato. Perhaps his greatest achievement as a teacher was the introduction of the *Republic* into the schools of Oxford, where previously the only Greek philosophy studied had been the *Ethics* and *Rhetoric* of Aristotle. Jowett was evidently drawn to Plato by a kind of natural attraction; and this affinity partly explains the wonderful success of the translation. That success led him on to the translation of others with whom he was less in sympathy, and whom he failed to handle with equal skill. Neither his *Thucydides* (1881) nor his *Politics of Aristotle* (1885) will bear

[1] *Life*, i. 92, n.

comparison with the translation of Plato. The latter was both a strange and an unfortunate choice of subject. Apparently he who is born a Platonist cannot be an Aristotelian. Jowett was unsympathetic towards the thought of Aristotle; and he found in Aristotle none of those fine turns of phrase which gave scope in Plato to the translator's skill in the manipulation of language.

Many, like Leslie Stephen, have been puzzled to explain the admittedly great influence exercised by Jowett over English thought in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is objected that his original writings are comparatively scanty, and that it is impossible to point to any great thought which was emphatically his own. He had a great reputation in philosophy; yet, it is said, the answer to the question, "Is any phase of speculation marked by Jowett's personal stamp?" must be in the negative. Three suggestions may be made towards the solution of this difficulty. The first is that it is a mistake to judge Jowett in his character of author wholly or even chiefly by his original writings. He is emphatically a translator, the greatest of his time and one of the greatest of all time; and he who successfully naturalises in another language such a classic as Plato, performs a service greater than the production of original work of the second class. Secondly, although Jowett has not left his own stamp on any phase of speculation, although he has not even affiliated himself to any school, he has here also performed a service analogous to that of translation. Almost in spite of himself the atmosphere of Hegelianism clung to him. It was under his shadow that the English Hegelian school grew, and among his pupils were its leaders[1] found. Herein Jowett served his generation better than he knew. German thought, in contrast with the hardness of Benthamism, and the aridity of Hamiltonianism, was like romance in the sphere of metaphysics. There it subserved the same function as that mysticism which had overspread religion and poetry, painting and architecture. It was the proper antidote to the merely reactionary mediævalism of the Oxford Movement.

[1] With the exception of Dr Hutchison Stirling, the author of the *Secret of Hegel*.

This fitness of his teaching to time, place and circumstance goes far to explain the influence of Jowett.

The third suggestion is that Jowett's influence was primarily a personal influence exercised over young men; and it was strongest in the days when he was simply tutor and not yet Master of Balliol. His conception of education had some of the characteristics of his translation of Plato. He was not indifferent to scholarship, but he did not put it in the first rank. He conceived a college to be a place for the training of men for life and for the service of their fellow-men. So far as the proper basing of οὖν and the true doctrine of the enclitic δε helped to that end, he was interested; beyond that point, he cared little. The realisation of this conception was the great purpose of his life; and his success is enough in itself to explain a high reputation. The men who knew him and who felt themselves indebted to him were men whose task it was to mould the thought and the history of the nation.

Jowett's pupil, Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882), was superior to his master in speculative capacity, and ranks as one of the most powerful English thinkers of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, a deficiency in the power of expression greatly curtailed the influence of his teaching; and the shortness of his life prevented him from doing the great work which, given longer time, he could have done. Green's first important production was the edition of Hume's works which he issued (1874–1875) in conjunction with T. H. Grose. The elaborate introduction to the *Treatise on Human Nature* makes this not merely a fine edition of a classic, but the most important application which had up to that date been made in English of Kantian and Hegelian principles. Though the uncouthness of the style throws irritating difficulties in the way of the reader, those who have the patience to overcome them reap their reward. Most of Green's other works were published posthumously, the greatest of them all being the profound *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883).

Mill's philosophy was dominant in England when the Oxford philosopher began his work; and though Green consistently avoided polemics, an undercurrent of opposition to Mill runs through his writings. He respected and admired the man; but

in the *Introduction to Hume* and in the *Prolegomena to Ethics*, as well as in the lectures on Mill's logic, his dissent from the philosophy is made manifest. He points out the inadequacy of Mill's conception of cause; in the introduction to Hume he makes a somewhat contemptuous reference to the "juggle which the modern popular logic performs with the word 'phenomenon[1]'"; and from the ethical theory of Utilitarianism his dissent is absolute and unqualified. It is true, he generously recognises the practical value of Utilitarianism. This is the theory, he says, which has given the conscientious citizen in modern Europe "a vantage-ground for judging of the competing claims on his obedience, and enabled him to substitute a critical and intelligent for a blind and unquestioning conformity[2]"; and he pronounces that "there is no doubt that the theory of an ideal good, consisting in the greatest happiness of the greatest number, as the end by reference to which the claim of all laws and powers and rules of action on our obedience is to be tested, has tended to improve human conduct and character[3]." But nevertheless he utterly rejects the idea of pleasure being the one true end of moral action, and instead places the *summum bonum* for man in "some perfection of human life, some realisation of human capacities[4]." The improvement in conduct and character is sufficient in itself, whether it be accompanied with pleasure or not. Both in his metaphysics and in his ethics Green was irreconcilably at variance with the Utilitarians. His function was to substitute for their empiricism an idealistic interpretation both of the universe and of human life.

Green's philosophy lent itself to purposes which were not his, all the more readily because of his dislike of polemics and his studied avoidance of unnecessary controversy with his contemporaries. In particular, he carefully abstained from attacking religious dogma, and was remarkably conservative in his attitude towards the Christian faith. The spirit was excellent, but the result has not been altogether happy. There are few symptoms of the state of contemporary English thought more melancholy

[1] *Hume's Works*, i. § 202.
[2] *Prolegomena*, 361.
[3] *ibid.* 363.
[4] *ibid.* 390.

than that afforded by the popularity which is enjoyed by the very peculiar "Germanism" of the modern High Church school. For much of this Green is indirectly responsible. It grew up under the shadow of his authority; its essence is a perversion of his ideas; and the natural conclusion is that plainer speech on his part would have gone far to prevent it.

Green's contemporary and friend, Edward Caird (1835–1908), was unquestionably superior to the great Oxford professor as a teacher and writer, though not in originality and power. It was somewhat later in his case than in Green's before the impact of his work began to be felt outside the college class-room. His first independent publication was *A Critical Account of the Philosophy of Kant* (1877), a work afterwards revised, expanded and completed in *The Critical Philosophy of Kant* (1889). Among his later works *The Evolution of Religion* (1893) and *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers* (1904) are specially worthy of note. The former in particular is among the profoundest as well as the most readable works dealing with the philosophy of religion in the English language.

Caird had a marvellous gift of exposition. He was perhaps the greatest teacher of his generation; at least it is safe to say that he had no superior. And greater than any of his printed works is the personal influence which he wielded, first at Glasgow as professor of moral philosophy from 1866 to 1893, and afterwards at Oxford as Master of Balliol College from 1893 to 1907. In the former place especially his influence over the successive generations of students was extraordinary. The situation was striking. The Scottish philosophy, though discredited, was not yet dead; and local prejudice told, of course, against the representative of the foreign system. Notwithstanding this, Caird won to himself year after year the allegiance of all who were capable of forming a judgment on the points at issue. He seldom or never attacked the dying school. He was content calmly and temperately to express his own views, leaving his teaching to germinate in the minds of his students as surely as the seed germinates in the earth. A similar reserve and temperance marked his attitude towards popular religious doctrines. The

philosophy he taught was profoundly religious, but yet it was a most powerful solvent of the dogmas which were still taught from the Scottish pulpit. This was dimly felt with respect to the teaching of both the brothers Caird. They went calmly on their way, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, uttering hardly a word of direct criticism, and yet surely and not slowly making the retention of the old beliefs in the old form impossible. The change in the religious beliefs of Scotland within the last generation has probably been due to Edward Caird in a greater degree than to any other single cause; for the men whom he taught became themselves, in one way or another, teachers. If this had been all, Caird himself would have deplored the result of his own teaching. Fundamentally, his mind was anything but sceptical. A purely negative result he considered always incomplete, and sometimes possibly worse than useless. But he knew that in this case the negative result was inevitable: if not philosophy, then science would surely bring it about. Quietly, therefore, but with unhesitating firmness, he brushed aside the familiar plea on behalf of the simple faith of the simple soul, and went on labouring, not to achieve a negative, but for the sake of the positive beyond. Idealism, he believed, was the antidote to the materialistic poison of the age; and for twenty-seven years he persevered in inviting his countrymen to abandon a "common sense" which could give no account of itself, to strike out boldly—if we may borrow Carlyle's metaphor—for the distant shore of truth, and to show their faith, not by a parrot repetition of belief in the incredible, but by staking all on the existence of that shore, even though they could not see it.

Caird's mind was essentially historical. Unlike Ferrier, he never dwelt long in the regions of Pure Being. He loved best to instil his own teaching through the medium of an examination of the thinkers of the past. Hence, for example, his examination of Comtism, his enquiry into the theology of the Greek thinkers, his critical examination of Kant himself. In all cases he was admirably fair-minded. He was more prone to discover agreement than difference—sometimes, it may be, by giving unconsciously some twist to the philosophy he was examining. In this respect

the difference between him and Green is wide. Green brings out his own thought by setting it in opposition to that of the thinker he is criticising; so much so that, in the case of Hume, the hasty reader may occasionally be tempted to ask whether it was worth while elaborately to examine a philosopher with whom the critic had little in common. Not so in the case of Caird: the surprise is rather to discover how much there is in common between the most diverse systems.

Few philosophers have written so well as Caird. His style often gives an appearance of simplicity to ideas which are really difficult. The work on Kant is, it is true, rather heavily loaded with technicalities; but this charm of style is certainly a feature of Caird's later writings. For he had the literary instinct as well as the philosophical; and he had the wisdom to diversify his studies in abstract thought with studies in the poets. He seems to have felt it necessary to justify to himself his literary studies by some association with philosophy; but for all that, the literary interest is unmistakable in the essays on Dante and Goethe, Wordsworth and Carlyle.

The distinguished Unitarian, James Martineau (1805–1900), cannot be classed among the English Hegelians, but nevertheless he may conveniently be noticed in company with them. While he differed from them in philosophic principle and method, he agreed with them in opposing the agnosticism of the time, and like them too he may be said to owe himself to Germany. In common with many other thinkers of the nineteenth century, Martineau dates "a new intellectual birth" from a visit to the country of Kant and Hegel. Martineau began his career as a Unitarian minister. In 1841 he became professor of mental and moral philosophy at Manchester New College, in which office he found himself a colleague of Francis William Newman (1805–1897), a man who, from a widely different starting-point, moved to a position not dissimilar to that of Martineau. Newman, however, though a person of remarkable gifts, will be remembered chiefly for the contrasts he affords to his greater brother. His *Phases of Faith* (1850), indeed, retains the interest which must always belong to a sincere account of spiritual experiences; but its predecessor,

The Soul (1849), which was enthusiastically welcomed by Martineau among others, is hardly remembered. On the other hand, unfortunately for Newman, the ill-advised translation of Homer cannot be forgotten as long as Arnold's *On Translating Homer* is read.

Though he remained to the end a member of the Unitarian body into which he was born, Martineau traversed a long range of thought in the course of his career. The scientific bias which was originally given to his education—he was to be a civil engineer—clung to him for some time and made him attach himself to the Utilitarians. Nevertheless, in his first book, the *Rationale of Religious Inquiry* (1836), which was spoken of, with some extravagance of praise, as one of the most wonderful works of the time, he expressed the view that those who did not believe in the miracles recorded in the Gospels ought not to be called Christians. If in later years he became more religious he also became more liberal, for the passage in which this opinion was expressed was ultimately struck out. It was a sense of the ethical inadequacy of the empirical school which led him to abandon determinism and to revise his conception of causation[1]; and a furlough of fifteen months, in 1848–1849, spent largely under Trendelenburg in Berlin, completed the process which was already begun. He studied chiefly Plato and Aristotle, but they had the effect of lifting "the darkness from the pages of Kant and even Hegel[2]." "The metaphysic of the world had come home to me," says Martineau, "and never again could I say that phenomena, in their clusters and chains, were all, or find myself in a universe with no categories but the like and unlike, the synchronous and successive[3]."

This is the vital change which links Martineau with the Hegelians and which colours all his later work. The principal fruits of his thought were *Studies of Christianity* (1858), *A Study of Spinoza* (1882), *Types of Ethical Theory* (1885) and *The Seat of Authority in Religion* (1890). By these works, with others in the same vein, and by numerous essays, sermons and addresses,

[1] Preface to *Types of Ethical Theory*, xii.
[2] *ibid.* xiii. [3] *ibid.*

Martineau rose to one of the highest positions in the philosophy of the time. He was essentially a moralist. Too broad-minded not to perceive the interdependence of all forms of speculation, too penetrating to misapprehend the importance of the final questions of ontology, his own interests were nevertheless almost wholly ethical and religious, and his investigations into the background of being were somewhat perfunctory. To such investigations he contributed little or nothing of his own; neither was he the disciple of any one school. He was eclectic in his tendency, culling from all sources what suited his own intellect and his emotional nature; and laying for his ethical and religious system a somewhat miscellaneous foundation. But whatever doubt may be felt about the groundwork, the main lines of the superstructure are perfectly distinct. The great conceptions which Martineau upholds are those of God, freedom and immortality. He strenuously fought against the sensationalism and materialism which the influence of physical science made prevalent in the middle period of the nineteenth century. He contended that without the conception of God there could be no unity in the intellectual nature of man, no moral imperative, no sure foundation for social order. And he maintained his position in English which, though sometimes less terse than it might have been, was always attractive and occasionally poetical. In method perhaps his greatest vice was discursiveness. His mind was remarkably open to suggestions, and he was seldom able to resist the temptation of following out a thought although it only bore indirectly on the main theme.

Martineau's high reputation was due partly to his great intellectual force, and partly to his lofty character and noble life—"a life," said the remarkable birthday address presented to him in 1888, "which has never been distracted by controversy, and in which personal interests and ambitions have never been allowed to have a place." But partly also it was due to his central position. At an earlier time Martineau the Unitarian would have been anathema to the orthodox; but while the rank and file were still absorbed in Gorham controversies and Jerusalem bishoprics, the more intelligent saw that the main battle was raging round

the central positions, and were glad to welcome an ally who would help to hold these. Martineau's unhappy difference with his sister Harriet showed how far he was from the extreme. No one probably did more effective work than he in opposition to materialism, altruism, positivism, and all the schemes of thought which seemed to threaten the very existence of Christianity; and therefore many, even of those who found all the truth within the limits of the Thirty-nine Articles or the Westminster Confession, learnt to look upon him as the champion of a cause which was theirs as well as his.

Of even wider and deeper significance than either the French or the German was the native English school of evolution; but this will be best treated in the chapter on science, because by far the greatest man of the school, Charles Darwin, was a man of science; and the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, who is second only to him in importance, is closely linked to science.

After the evolutionists, no recent philosophic writers are more interesting than those who treat of the philosophy of history. They belong to a class sparsely represented in the literature of the past. Vico has been called the father of the philosophy of history; Montesquieu's great work, *L'Esprit des Lois*, is one of the classics of the subject; more recently, Hegel had thrown the light of his genius upon it in a series of lectures which have profoundly influenced subsequent thought. But there was as yet no beaten path; only a few choice spirits had perceived the possibility of a philosophy of history. Gradually, however, the imperative need for it was forced upon men by the enormous and unmanageable accumulation of materials, under the load of which intelligible and intelligent history was in danger of being smothered. The need was felt first in the sphere of law, and Austin's work was an attempt to satisfy it. The whole school of the Benthamites felt the need, and especially John Mill, the great aim of whose philosophy was to formulate a science of man in society. The Comtists were influenced by the same desire. But the desire could not be gratified unless some principles could be enunciated that would reduce the chaos to order; and accordingly the attempt is made to discover such principles. In England the

principal names associated with this attempt are those of Buckle, Maine, and Bagehot.

Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–1862) was one of that small band of men who have devoted themselves through life to the unswerving pursuit of a great ideal. A delicate child, he received but little regular education, leaving school at the early age of fourteen; and though afterwards he passed a short time under a private tutor, by far the greater part of his vast store of knowledge was accumulated by himself without guidance from anyone. Some have sought to account thus for the deficiencies of Buckle's great work; but there is a good deal of pedantry in this. It is probable that the *History of Civilisation* gained as much as it lost from the absence, in Buckle's case, of a regular University training. It has an indescribable freshness which is rarely found except in the works of self-taught genius; recalling, in this respect, Lecky's *Rationalism*, which, though the writer was regularly trained, was largely the product of self-directed browsings in the libraries of Italy. The death of his father in 1842 left Buckle his own master and, happily, the possessor of a small fortune, which enabled him to follow the bent of his own mind. He read everything he could lay his hands upon, devouring books with a rapidity, and retaining their contents with a tenacity of memory, like that of Macaulay. His capacity for acquisition was enormous: though the irregularity of his education made him rather backward than otherwise in boyhood, by the year 1850 he knew no fewer than nineteen languages, seven of them so that he could either converse in them or write them, and the rest well enough to read them without trouble[1].

A plan of his great work seems to have been formed in some dim way soon after his father's death; and to the realisation of this scheme the whole of his manhood was given up. He would rarely suffer himself to be diverted even for a moment; but his admiration for Mill, whom he considered the greatest of living men, led to an exception. On the publication of Mill's *Liberty*, Buckle reviewed the book in *Fraser's Magazine*. Mill mentions one of the most outrageous cases of judicial oppression in recent

[1] Huth's *Life of Buckle*, i. 38.

history, the sentence of twenty-one months' imprisonment pronounced by Sir John Coleridge upon a half-witted man named Pooley for writing upon a gate offensive words about Christianity. Buckle, roused to indignation, enquired into the matter, satisfied himself of Mill's accuracy, and attacked Coleridge with a vehemence all the greater because of the prominence of the latter's position. Many of Buckle's own friends doubted the wisdom of his attack; but he held his ground.

Like many another explorer in an untravelled world, Buckle found the margin fade before him. In 1852 he thought himself on the verge of publication; and in 1853, in a letter to Lord Kintore[1], he explains with admirable clearness the plan of the book as it actually appeared. Already the scope of the work has been greatly curtailed, the idea of a history of civilisation in general giving place to that of a history of English civilisation. It is to be an "attempt to rescue history from the hands of annalists, chroniclers, and antiquaries"; and the root idea of it is the detection of the laws that govern progress. "I have been long convinced," says Buckle, "that the progress of every people is regulated by principles—or, as they are called, laws—as regular and as certain as those which govern the physical world. To discover those laws is the object of my work."

The publication in 1857 of the first volume of the *History of Civilisation in England* raised Buckle at once to a high rank among men of letters. The second volume in 1861 was equally well received. The edition in three volumes, which bears the title, *History of Civilisation in France and England, Spain and Scotland* (1866), was posthumous.

Buckle's work has already passed through two phases in public opinion, and it seems to be entering upon a third. They are phases through which many another great man's reputation has passed. At first, the boldness and originality of the design and the brilliancy of the execution swept readers away; they thought that the riddle was already read, and that the laws enunciated by Buckle were the veritable laws under which human progress had

[1] *Life of Buckle*, i. 63.

been made. There were hostile criticisms in plenty; but, as Buckle says, "if men are not struck down by hostility, they always thrive by it[1]." The critics were brushed aside, and for a time Buckle passed as a sort of prophet, and the *History of Civilisation* as an inspired utterance. Then came the reaction which inevitably follows upon excess. Calmer consideration awakened the suspicion that all the incalculable complexity of human history could not be brought under the comparatively simple laws laid down in the *History of Civilisation*. It was perceived moreover that Buckle was a man of prejudices; and that, in particular, his account of civilisation in Scotland was vitiated by the anti-ecclesiastical bias of his mind. Hence came an opposite excess; and twenty or thirty years after his death Buckle was as much underrated as he had been at first over-estimated. Of late years there have been signs of a tendency for opinion to settle down in a position intermediate between the two extremes. Mr J. M. Robertson's *Buckle and his Critics* is a powerful and in many points a successful vindication of the great historian; and it is seen that, after full allowance is made for errors and exaggerations, enough remains to establish a very solid reputation. Buckle was a man of real genius; and if he has not founded a science of history, he has at any rate formulated a number of very fruitful generalisations.

As is not infrequently the case, some of the best of these generalisations were among those most fiercely attacked when they were first promulgated. In particular, no doctrine of the *History of Civilisation* was so vehemently impugned as Buckle's assertion of the superior efficacy of the intellectual to the moral element as a cause of progress. The former, he taught, is dynamic, the latter, static. Buckle was by no means disposed to underrate morality: he held that, for the individual, it was far more important to be moral than to be clever; and he thought that education ought to aim more at the development of character than of intellect; but when he looked abroad upon history and considered men in the mass, he saw that the great discoveries

[1] *Life*, ii. 86.

which had raised the condition of mankind had been the work of intellect. Buckle had the grim satisfaction of being told by a later critic, that this conception, which was vehemently denounced when he first promulgated it, was "a truism."

Probably nothing has done so much to foster doubt about the soundness of the *History of Civilisation* as the treatment of the individual; and this is no mere subordinate matter, but a thing absolutely fundamental. If Carlyle's view, that history is essentially biographic, be correct, there can be no "science of history" in the sense in which Buckle used the phrase. These two stand in the most pronounced opposition; and the fact that *Frederick the Great* and the *History of Civilisation* were published contemporaneously vividly illustrates the danger of laying down general rules as to the thought of any age. In the former, it is hardly too much to say that the history of the whole continent of Europe is centred in Frederick; in the latter we are taught the insignificance of the individual. "In the great march of human affairs," says Buckle, "individual peculiarities count for nothing"; and he means not only ordinary individuals but the greatest men as well. If this proposition be not true, then it is impossible to reduce history under law; for the individual is incalculable as well as indefinable. If it be possible to merge the individual in the mass and to reason by averages, then the conception of law prevails; in so far as it is not possible to do so, its scope is limited.

Buckle had great faith in the statistical method. If we take men one by one, each seems to act in accordance with his own good pleasure. He adopts this profession or that, marries or remains celibate, emigrates or stays at home, as seems good to himself. If we widen the view, the soundness of this conclusion seems to become doubtful. It appears that the number of emigrants varies through causes beyond the control of the individual, and that marriages are few or many according as food is dear or cheap. For such reasons as these Buckle argued that the individual could be eliminated. Take a wide enough view, he urges, and it is possible to detect the laws that govern human action, irrespective of the supposed freedom of the individual. Even as regards the average man, it may be doubted whether the argument is valid;

though for many purposes averages yield results sufficiently accurate, and often they are the only means by which results can be attained at all. But with regard to exceptional men the fallacy is obvious. It may be possible to determine the average brain-power of a million men; but if each man possessed exactly the average, the result would be widely different from that which would follow if one man possessed a thousand times as much as any of his fellows. It is just the exceptional man who makes those intellectual discoveries to which, as Buckle insists, all progress is due. Suppose the French Revolution without Napoleon. And what law of averages shall guarantee a Napoleon? We take him after he has appeared, and he becomes part of that material from which the average is struck. Perhaps even *his* brain-power does not appreciably alter the world's average; but its concentration in one head changes the world's history. There is exaggeration in both extremes, but Carlyle's hero-worship is sounder after all than Buckle's science of history. It is not true that Julius Caesar and Napoleon and Luther and Shakespeare and Newton count for nothing in the great march of human affairs; and no law has ever been formulated which entitles us to count upon such men appearing when they are needed. No calipers yet devised can take the diameter of a spirit. Averages are often delusive. It would be easy to tabulate the heights of the peaks of the Alps and to strike an average; but the summit of Mont Blanc would not be a foot the lower, and it would still be the only spot from which it would be possible to overlook all the others. Within a few years of Buckle, Huxley, approaching the problem from a sounder basis of science, writes: "The advance of mankind has everywhere depended on the production of men of genius; and that production is a case of 'spontaneous variation' becoming hereditary, not by physical propagation, but by the help of language, letters and the printing press[1]." History can never become purely scientific, and the individual can never be eliminated; but on the other hand his presence does not mean the reign of lawlessness and caprice.

What Leslie Stephen said about Austin and Sir Henry Maine

[1] *Life of Huxley*, i. 240.

(1822–1888) might be repeated with regard to the relation between Maine and Buckle; for Buckle's star too shone dimmer after the appearance of the new light. The publication of Maine's *Ancient Law* (1861) at once established his reputation. It was followed by a series of works bearing upon cognate problems,—*Village Communities* (1871), *The Early History of Institutions* (1875) and *Dissertations on Early Law and Custom* (1883). The only important work of Maine which stands somewhat apart is his *Popular Government* (1885). In his other works he deals with the distant past and treats his material in a purely scientific spirit. In *Popular Government* he turns the mind stored with the thoughts thus accumulated upon the present, and even seeks to forecast the future. It is not surprising that many of those who disliked his unfavourable conclusions as to modern democracy regarded the *Popular Government* as little better than a political pamphlet.

Maine's plan is much less ambitious than was Buckle's, and partly for that very reason he has been more successful. He takes for his subject not the whole of civilisation, even in any one country, but only laws and political institutions. These he regards in the spirit of a philosopher: he is not content merely to ask what they are, but he seeks to show their place in life and thought, and to penetrate their meaning by tracing them back to their primitive forms. It is not too much to say that Maine revolutionised jurisprudence by bringing it into organic connexion with history. One of the great merits of his mode of treatment is that it is thoroughly evolutionary. Whether he was consciously influenced by *The Origin of Species* or not, it is certain that the spirit of that book informs all Maine's works. The reader of *Ancient Law* is made to feel that, however distant in time the subject under discussion may be, it has a vital bearing upon the present. To this is due much of the interest which Maine never fails to inspire. He has in him nothing of the mere antiquary. The progress from *status* to contract is just a step in a great process which is still going on; the study of the village community throws a flood of light on laws actually in force and customs actually followed at the present day. This practical

aspect of his speculations was characteristic of Maine. He never philosophised purely for the sake of philosophising; but no one was more vividly conscious that a mere fact was nothing until it was interpreted. One of his highest gifts was his remarkable power of reasoning back from scanty remnants of the past to the system in which they had a place.

Another of Maine's great merits is the charm of his style, which is even better than Buckle's—as clear, and more uniformly bright. Scarcely any other writer on juridical subjects is comparable with him. Macaulay made Indian codification fascinating; but probably only he and Maine have ever performed such a feat. Conceptions which, in writers like Austin, are of the hardest and most arid kind, are in Maine full of interest. The reason is that he always looks at them in relation to the life of the community in which they prevail. It is this which makes Maine's books so eminently readable; it is the underlying evolutionary conception which makes him always sparkling and vivacious. There is strictly no *past* to him, for the past lives on in the present.

The youngest of the three, Walter Bagehot (1826–1877), is a man whose works do not suggest, to outward view, that unity of aim which characterises Buckle and Maine. He was a journalist, and his writings have something of the multifarious character which is fostered by journalism. But he is too great a man to be treated as a writer of miscellaneous prose; and when the attempt is made to weigh and measure the importance of the various items of his work, it becomes manifest that his fame must rest on what he accomplished as a publicist.

Bagehot received his education at University College, London, and afterwards read law with a view to the bar; but, though he was called, he soon abandoned the intention of making the law his profession, and joined his father, who was a partner in Stuckey's bank. He entered upon this career with zest: "Business," said he, "is much more amusing than pleasure"; and he is probably the only writer who has ever succeeded in making business amusing even to the reader who is not a business man. It seems clear that his education was for him a fortunate one. If he had

gone to Oxford or Cambridge, whatever he had gained, he would certainly have been in less familiar touch with commerce and with statesmanship than he was in London. And what specially distinguishes Bagehot is just the breath of real life which he communicates to his treatment of these subjects. On the literary side of his education too he was by no means unfortunate; for in those days Clough was the head of University Hall, and Bagehot was strongly drawn to him.

Nearly all Bagehot's work is critical in spirit, but the essays devoted to literary criticism, though they are among the best of the time, rich, suggestive, pointed, and enlivened here and there by a pungent humour, are nevertheless little more than a by-play of his mind. Like all he did, they are philosophical in essence, and rest upon a wholly different foundation from that which underlies the criticisms of Jeffrey and his school. Bagehot always seeks to penetrate to the principle on which a writer's art is based, in the conviction that by it he will be able to explain all special characteristics. This, for example, is the manner of procedure in the essay on Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning, or Pure, Ornate and Grotesque Art. Here and elsewhere there is a feeling of abundance about the criticism; the words seem to flow out of the fulness of the critic's mind; and wealth makes him careless. His good things are often dropped casually, as the ostrich drops its eggs. It would not be easy to find a more illuminative criticism than his remark that sacred poets thrive by translating the weaker portions of Wordsworth and Coleridge into the speech of women. He is notable too for wise, pregnant maxims: "Though it is false and mischievous to speak of hereditary vice, it is most true and wise to observe the mysterious fact of hereditary temptation." And he is rich in incidental humour, e.g.: "A schoolmaster should have an atmosphere of awe, and walk wonderingly, as if he was amazed at being himself"; or the grotesque description of H. Crabb Robinson: "The nose was one of the most slovenly which nature had ever turned out, and the chin of excessive length, with portentous power of extension."

The *Biographical Studies* are even more happy than the literary criticisms. Dealing by preference with statesmen and

publicists, Bagehot is here upon the ground which he had studied most minutely. In the subjects he selects, in the praise he bestows or in the censure he passes, the reader may frequently find hints of Bagehot's own likes and dislikes. He admired learning; but he admired still more capacity for affairs and the power to apply knowledge to the practical needs of life. The combination of the two is the secret of his strong admiration of Sir G. Cornewall Lewis. "No German professor," Bagehot declares, "from the smoke and study of many silent years, has ever put forth books more bristling with recondite references, more exact in every technicality of scholarship, more rich in natural reflection, than Sir George Cornewall Lewis found time, mind, and scholar-like curiosity, to write in the very thick of eager English life. And yet he was never busy, or never seemed so." But perhaps Bagehot is seen at his best in the essay on Sir Robert Peel, the whole of which is an admirable specimen of shrewd wisdom, while scattered through it are many happy touches of humour. Not the least of his merits is his capacity of expressing in a memorable way truths which are or ought to be familiar. "A constitutional statesman," he tells us, "is in general a man of common opinions and uncommon abilities." We feel that this not only is but must be true. If he were not a man of common opinions, how could he ever gain his position? if he were not a man of uncommon abilities, how could he escape disaster? Many had blundered round the meaning before Bagehot: it is the essence of the criticism made against not a few constitutional statesmen, that they follow rather than lead, adopt the opinions of the multitude rather than show them something better. But though many had dimly felt the truth, no one had ever expressed it so tersely and so well.

These essays, however, whether the date of the individual papers be early or late, are of the nature of preparatory studies to the main work of Bagehot's life. He was a publicist, and his most valuable work was economic and political in character. His two greatest books are his *English Constitution* and his *Lombard Street*. A third, *Physics and Politics* (1872), is sometimes preferred to these; but it is more interesting as a

symptom than for its intrinsic merits. It is an attempt, not completely successful, to apply the idea of development to politics. Though the scheme is promising the book as a whole is less suggestive than most of Bagehot's writings.

The English Constitution was published as a series of essays in the *Fortnightly Review* between May, 1865, and June, 1867; and the essays were collected into a volume in the latter year. *Lombard Street: a description of the Money Market*, first appeared in 1873. These were the subjects upon which Bagehot had been training himself all his life to write, and on them all the wealth of his thought is lavished. He shows in the highest degree the power of writing on great and serious subjects weightily, but not in the least heavily. No writer has ever made the money-market half as attractive as he; there is no book on the English Constitution comparable to his in interest for the general reader. And yet this is not due to superficiality; rather the opposite. The living interest which Bagehot infuses into economics and constitutional problems alike is due to the fact that he begins by treating his subject as a living thing. He brushes aside the cobwebs of old theory, and asks himself what is the genuine fact beneath. He had himself much of that vivid power of realisation which he justly ascribed to Scott: "If he [Scott] had given the English side of the race to Derby, he would have described the Bank of England paying in sixpences, and also the loves of the cashier." Though the loves of the cashier did not come in Bagehot's way, he wrote in the spirit of this quotation.

In Bagehot's *Lombard Street* there is very little about the Bank Charter Act; but there is a great deal about the operation of financial facts in times of crisis on the minds of merchants and bankers. The human element, not the mechanical one, is the vital thing; and no system, however plausible, can possibly work, if it fails to take account of that vital thing. *Lombard Street* owes its impressiveness to the constancy with which the human element is kept in view. It is written in the clearest and simplest style, almost wholly free from technicalities. The concentration of money in banks acts as a bounty on trading with borrowed money, and so produces a "democratic structure of commerce," which

renders men prompt to seize advantages. Hence, "all *sudden* trades come to England," because money is readily lent. Hence too comes the extraordinary centralisation of the commercial system of the country, which turns on the reserve of the Bank of England as on a pivot; so that, in Bagehot's own words, "on the wisdom of the directors of that one Joint Stock Company, it depends whether *England shall be solvent or insolvent*[1]." Bagehot's book had an influence such as few economic works have ever produced. It ranks with Cairnes's *Slave Power* as a demonstration of a particular economic theme; and the work it did was done once for all. Circumstances have changed, partly through lapse of time, but not a little through the influence of Bagehot. He educated not merely public opinion, but Government and the Bank itself, as to the true position of the Bank of England and its functions and duties. The facts were open to everybody, yet no one understood their true significance till Bagehot explained it. Probably *Lombard Street* has either averted or mitigated more than one commercial crisis during the generation which has passed since it was written.

Much the same holds true of Bagehot's discussion of the English constitution. No one has done more than he to get rid of the theory of checks and balances; and he did so once more because he insisted upon digging down to the fact beneath the show; for he shares the interest he ascribes to science in "stupid" facts. But on the other hand no one knew better than he that sentiment also is a fact. The sound system of finance and the sound constitution must alike act on the imagination. This is necessary in finance, because if all were to insist upon the hard fact—*i.e.* the solid money—there does not exist enough to satisfy one-tenth part of the claims. It is necessary in politics, because the average man, or the man ignorant and stupid beyond the average, can understand the "august" part of a constitution, for he can see it; but he cannot understand its operative part, for to do so he must assimilate an abstract idea. The conception of government by a monarch is simple, for the monarch may be seen in the streets of the capital, and the sceptre and crown are on

[1] The italics are Bagehot's.

show in the Tower of London, to prove that he is not as other men are. But the cabinet is a mere board of gentlemen, without insignia, clothed with no legal powers, theoretically, it may almost be said, non-existent.

Great originality and independence of mind, imagination, clearness of conception, a vivid style and a power of lucid exposition were Bagehot's special gifts. What he accomplished was due, above all, to his determination to see the truth for himself, to probe things to the bottom. He took no theory upon trust. Theory told him that the Bank of England was a joint stock bank, like any other: fact convinced him that the Bank of England was indeed a joint stock bank,—but not like any other. The bank which kept the only reserve in the country must necessarily be different from all others. Theory again told him that the constitution of England was a system of balances in which King, Lords and Commons were played off against one another: fact showed him that a body of gentlemen called a Cabinet, unrecognised in the constitution, exercised more power than any one of them. In both cases, so much the worse for the theory. Bagehot follows the guidance of fact, and his readers follow him.

In Mill, in Harriet Martineau, and in Bagehot notice has already been taken of certain phases of economic theory. No other economist of the period rises to their level in literature, nor does any one rival Mill in eminence in the science of economics; but this form of thought was too characteristic of the time to be passed over without further notice. One economist, Malthus, moved the mind which moved the world; another, Ricardo, though himself a thinker only of the third rank, for half a century wielded an influence which has rarely been exercised even by the greatest. The change in the conditions of industry produced by the introduction of machinery and the improvement of the means of locomotion, rendered inevitable the investigation of economic problems. The development of democracy exercised a remarkable influence upon the character of the theories which resulted from this investigation. For the most striking fact in the history of economics is the change which gradually comes about between

the beginning of the period and the end. In the beginning, the theorists represent, in the main, the views of triumphant and prosperous capitalism; in the end, those of the labouring population have become prominent. In the beginning, the sway of Ricardo is nearly absolute; in the middle, it still prevails, though not without challenge; in the end, his authority is all but absolutely superseded. Mill may be described as a Ricardian in spite of himself. His sympathy with the working classes made him shrink from some of the results of abstract economic theory, and Comte suggested thoughts alien from the Ricardian system. But Mill was essentially an "orthodox," or "classical," or "deductive" economist; he added little to the theory and omitted little from it; if he had even assimilated Adam Smith as completely as he had assimilated Ricardo, he might have found within the bounds of orthodox economics the germs of a more liberal theory. But Mill was among the last of the economists who were in the fullest sense "orthodox." His disciple, John Elliott Cairnes (1824–1875), remained, indeed, firm in the faith, and expounded it with great ability in *Some Leading Principles of Political Economy newly Expounded* (1874); while *The Slave Power* (1862) is a singularly brilliant monograph and a remarkably successful application of the principles of science to a great practical question.

Long before Cairnes, however, and before even Mill, there can be detected the beginnings of a revolt against the Ricardian doctrines. Richard Jones (1790–1855), the successor of Malthus at Haileybury, showed that the celebrated theory of rent held good only under certain conditions, and that what he called "peasant rents" were fixed not by competition but by custom. He may be regarded as a precursor of the historical school, which for thirty years has been steadily gaining ground at the expense of the abstract economists. To this result forces outside England—the theories of Marx and Lassalle for example —and forces extra-economic contributed. Carlyle poured his contempt upon what he called a philosophy of dirt, and Ruskin followed him with no less vehemence and with greater persistency. Under such influences the popular faith in "laws" was shaken, and the historical method began to prevail over the

deductive. Vast compilations of facts, like Thorold Rogers' *History of Agriculture and Prices in England* (1866–1887) and *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* (1884) are symptomatic; and T. E. Cliffe Leslie (1827?–1882) in *Essays Moral and Political* (1879) expounds the theory upon which men had already begun to act. The general result is the substitution for the old "laws" of a body of teaching far less dogmatic,—teaching imbued with the conviction that, for the most part, economic truth is a thing which varies with degrees of latitude and longitude and is not necessarily the same yesterday, to-day and for ever; and cautious of asserting anything until abstract reasoning has been confirmed by the appeal to experience.

NOTE:—This chapter was in print before the death of the veteran Hegelian, J. Hutchison Stirling.

CHAPTER III

SCIENCE

If every book were 'literature,' it would be necessary to discuss *Bradshaw*. Fortunately, there are multitudes of volumes which can be at once and without hesitation dismissed as not coming within the denotation of the word. In many cases, however, there is some difficulty in determining what ought to be included, and what may be safely dismissed as outside the pale. It will probably be agreed that the great majority of scientific works belong to the latter category, and that science in general impinges upon literature only in the same way that every other force which moves humanity does so. But last century was pre-eminently the century of science. Never before was its influence so potent, and never before were so many books written which were literary as well as scientific. Since the beginning of the Victorian era the spirit of science has permeated literature in every department. Its mark is to be seen in poetry. It is seen too in imaginative prose: Ruskin, who declares that he himself might have been the first geologist of his time, reproaches Wordsworth because "he could not understand that to break a rock with a hammer in search of crystal may sometimes be an act not disgraceful to human nature, and that to dissect a flower may sometimes be as proper as to dream over it[1]"; and, unlike the poet, he bases his own conception of beauty upon scientific study.

[1] *Modern Painters*, iii., xvii. § 7.

But it is only in men's attitude towards truth and in their conception of the universe that the influence of science can be truly seen. The idea of the reign of law is the work of science. Quite recently, "chance" was not a mere name for our ignorance, but a positive conception. Dimly and confusedly it was felt that there was in real existence a "reign of Chaos and old Night." The winds blew where they listed; and few conceived that they were as strictly links in the great chain of causation as were the fall of the apple and the rise of water in the Torricellian tube. On reflection, doubtless, all educated men, then as now, would have admitted that every event had a cause; but they would have been much less sure than we are that the cause must be natural, and they would have had no adequate conception of the "orderliness" of nature, of the true "reign of law." They regarded violent breaches of continuity as things of relatively frequent occurrence. It requires an effort to remember that before the publication of Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830–1833), the science of geology was taught as essentially "catastrophic."

The change has been fruitful of results far beyond the bounds of the theses propounded and the propositions established. It has created a tone of mind, a habit of thought, whose influence is by no means limited to science. Science, strictly interpreted, has little to say about the problems of profoundest interest to humanity; but the spirit and the method of science have influenced the treatment of those problems. Multitudes of things have silently but surely become impossible of belief, not because they have been disproved by science, but because the scientific habit of mind has been fatal to them as sunlight is fatal to the bacillus which loves the dark. In the nineteenth century the battle for freedom of thought was won; and the very opprobrium formerly attaching to the phrase "free thought," proves how necessary it was to fight it.

Under such circumstances it is not only relevant and legitimate, but essential, to pay some attention to the development of science, particularly in those branches which have been most directly influential in producing this revolution in thought. These are geology and biology, with the kindred science of anthropology.

It was the change in the former which paved the way for the great development of the latter; and it has been the new ideas originated in the latter which, more than any other single cause, have revolutionised modern thought.

In the early part of the nineteenth century the science of geology was still in its infancy. Important discoveries had been made and solid work had been done. Werner had done much for mineralogy; Hutton had attempted to explain the earth by the operation of causes still at work; and William Smith had proved that certain strata were characterised by the presence in them of fossil species not to be found at all in other strata. But the full consequences of this last discovery were not perceived: it remained a fact waiting for its interpretation. Even the foundation of the science was hardly yet secure. Though there were uniformitarians before Lyell, the accepted basis of geology was still catastrophic; that is, in cases of difficulty there was constantly resort to causes, natural indeed but not orderly. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and floods (partial ones) are phenomena which actually occur; but a world shaped by such forces must be regarded as the product of a series of spasms rather than of a process of growth. Substitute for these glacial action, the slow denudation by rivers, subsidence and elevation, and the like, and we have all the difference between order and chaos, between law and caprice. This great change was brought about by Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, which made manifest the immense superiority of the uniformitarian doctrine. The older men were naturally slow to accept the new views; and Darwin's teacher, the botanist Henslow, while advising him to take Lyell's book with him on the *Beagle*, warned him against accepting its teaching. The warning was vain; for at the very first place where he had the opportunity to geologise, Darwin became convinced of the "immense superiority" of Lyell's views[1].

Lyell therefore, though he was not the founder of geology even in the modified sense in which Adam Smith is spoken of as the founder of political economy, may be compared to some reformer of a state, some great legislator, a Lycurgus or a Solon,

[1] *Life of Darwin*, i. 73.

who has set it on a new path of honour and of progress. To him more than to any other man is due the present state of the science; and to his agency is due the fact that a great domain of nature has been effectually brought under the conception of law. Except Darwin, no one else has contributed so greatly to the revolution of thought which we have ascribed to science. It is not necessary to pronounce him a greater man of science than Faraday, or Joule, or Kelvin; but the principles he enunciated did result in a revolution; theirs were just the orderly development out of the laws of Newton.

Biological evolution is only the extension to the organic world of the principles which Lyell maintained to be dominant in the inorganic. Lyell had to face the question in his examination of Lamarck, whose speculations at once fascinated and repelled him; for he viewed with great repugnance the theory of the descent of man from the lower forms of life. It was largely this feeling which led to his negative judgment on Lamarck; and it was this which for nearly a generation kept him in the position he had taken up in the *Principles of Geology*. Before the appearance of his second great work, the *Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man* (1863), Darwin's book had been published. Lyell, who, with Huxley and Hooker, had been mentally fixed upon by Darwin as one of the judges by whose verdict he would consider his own theory to stand or fall, was a convert; and the new book necessarily showed the influence of the Darwinian theory. But it also showed the influence of the old feeling of repugnance, and Darwin was disappointed. Lyell could not bring himself to adopt the theory of the descent of man from the brutes, which he saw clearly to follow from the admission of the modification of species.

Purely as a man of science Hugh Miller (1802–1856) would certainly not deserve mention along with Lyell. He inculcated no new principle; and he was far too imperfectly educated to be capable of forming valuable opinions on the great questions opened up by geology; but on the other hand the rugged stone-mason was not only a writer of vigorous and beautiful English, but was himself a very striking and interesting figure. The materials for his first noteworthy book, the *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*

(1835), were drawn from his native Cromarty. So in great part were those from which the *Old Red Sandstone* (1840) was constructed. Miller's great merit in science was that he gave with entire candour the results of his own observation. He might misinterpret; his ignorance of anatomy might make some of his conclusions worthless; but he had looked with his own eyes, and he faithfully described what he saw. "I have been," he said towards the close of his life, "an honest journalist. I have never once given expression to an opinion which I did not conscientiously regard as sound, nor stated a fact which, at the time at least, I did not believe to be true."

Miller had migrated from Cromarty to Edinburgh in 1839; and he found himself plunged there into the midst of a theological turmoil. He became *pars magna* of the Scottish Disruption: Guthrie calls him "the greatest of all the men of the Ten Years' Conflict" except Chalmers. For sixteen years, from 1840 till his death, he edited *The Witness*, a paper issued twice a week to advocate the principles of the anti-patronage party, while it incidentally did a service to literature by encouraging such talent as the editor could discover. His next independent book, *Footprints of the Creator* (1849), also bore evidence of theological interests. It was a reply to the *Vestiges of Creation*, and an attempt, in opposition to it, to maintain the accepted and orthodox doctrine of special creation as against the form of evolution advocated in the *Vestiges*.

The *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) remained for a long time anonymous, and it was not till 1884 that the veil was completely withdrawn and the authorship of Robert Chambers (1802–1871) avowed. Chambers was one of those Scots of active intellect and indomitable industry who have come to be regarded as typical of their country. A thirst for knowledge and an interest in books and in education characterised his brother William as well as himself and determined the direction of their activity. They founded the publishing house of W. and R. Chambers, devoted themselves especially to the diffusion of useful knowledge, and were both active with their own pens. Robert, however, was much the more copious and the more distinguished as a writer.

As early as 1823 he published his *Traditions of Edinburgh*, which made Scott ask with wonder where the boy had got all his information. From that date to the end of his life Chambers produced a prolific crop of histories, biographies, and antiquarian compilations. He is seen at his best in books of the last class, such as the *Traditions of Edinburgh* and the *Book of Days*. But of all his writings the anonymous *Vestiges* is the most remarkable. Even if it be not a great book it is a memorable one. Chambers had scarcely the bare elements of the knowledge necessary to deal with the subject. Huxley was irritated by "the prodigious ignorance and thoroughly unscientific habit of mind manifested by the writer[1]." Hooker was amused. Darwin thought the writing and arrangement admirable, but the geology bad and the zoology far worse[2]. Sedgwick, who wrote a crushing criticism of the book in the *Edinburgh Review*, ungallantly argued that the author was probably a woman, "partly from the fair dress and agreeable exterior of the *Vestiges*; and partly from the utter ignorance the book displays of all sound physical logic[3]." On the other hand, Richard Owen refused to write a hostile review, and declared the zoology and anatomy of the book to be on the whole correct[4].

But in spite of all the weight of authority the book was exceedingly popular, and by the year 1853 it had passed through ten editions. Nor were the reasons solely those suggested by Sedgwick, —the shallowness of the fashionable reading world and the dogmatic form of the work. Darwin, with his customary justice, points out merits as well as defects. The *Vestiges* is well written and admirably arranged; no reader could fail to understand the central idea; and this is a most striking one. It was not new: Erasmus Darwin and Lamarck had both given expression to the hypothesis of a gradual modification of species by natural causes; but, for whatever reason, the ground was now more ready for the seed than it had been in those earlier days. Chambers deserves for the *Vestiges* the kind and degree of credit which belongs to one who

[1] *Life of Darwin*, ii. 188. [2] *ibid.* i. 33.
[3] *Correspondence of Macvey Napier*, 491.
[4] *Life of Owen*, quoted in Benn's *English Rationalism*, ii. 12.

has been among the first to grasp a great conception, and who has had the skill to make it interesting. He could not buttress it with anything like the immense mass of evidence accumulated by Darwin.

It was not owing to Chambers that the idea of evolution ultimately prevailed, but nevertheless he had very effectually fluttered the dovecots both of science and of orthodoxy. The *Vestiges* was just the sort of work to rouse a "theologian studying geology" like Miller. The latter, always distinguished for a full share of the *perfervidum ingenium* of his countrymen, seldom wrote with more force and warmth of conviction than in the *Footprints*. His case was strong, his feelings were excited, and he poured out the stores of his observation with energy and effect. It was the last book of geology published during his life. *The Testimony of the Rocks* (1857) maintained the same thesis; but in the year before it appeared Miller, his mind upset by overwork and by physical suffering due to the hardships of his youth, had died by his own hand.

Miller's best book is the admirable autobiography, *My Schools and Schoolmasters* (1854), with its picture of himself, strong-willed, self-reliant, high-minded, indomitable. His is not the least noble figure in that band of leaders of the Disruption, every man of whom commands respect; and though he was not, like the ministers, called upon to surrender home and income, it is safe to say that he had the high sense of duty and the courage which would have nerved him to sacrifice everything for conscience' sake. The picture of such a man drawn by his own hand was bound to be among the treasures of literature.

Chambers in the *Vestiges* had broached an idea which in the hands of an incomparably greater man was destined to prove the most influential among all the ideas originated or maintained in the nineteenth century. Few periods in the history of the world have been intellectually more active, none has ever been more copious in literary production, and none has more numerous names of high, if not of the highest, rank. At the close of this century a London daily paper asked its readers to send lists of the ten books, English or foreign, produced during the century,

which had been in their judgment most influential. The lists varied greatly, but in one respect they all agreed. In every list returned stood the name of *The Origin of Species*. No great importance need be attached to plebiscites of this sort; but such remarkable unanimity of judgment as this, after an interval of forty years, comes as near, in weight and authority, to the judgment of remote posterity, as anything we can conceive. And yet the idea of evolution was not new. It had been more than once mooted by men of science; it can be traced far back in philosophy; and through two distinct sources, Herbert Spencer and the English Hegelians, it was penetrating English thought in philosophic form.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) ought strictly to be classed with the philosophers rather than with the men of science, but his is so peculiarly the philosophy of science and his connexion with the theory of evolution is so intimate, that there is an obvious convenience in discussing him here. It is to him we must go if we wish to see the theory of evolution stretched to the utmost reach, and perhaps beyond it; and however various may be the views as to the intrinsic worth of his system, all must acknowledge that there is something singularly impressive in the vast scope of his design and in the dauntless persistence with which, thrusting aside all secondary ends and resolutely struggling against feeble health, he devoted his life to its execution.

The speculative bent of Spencer's mind was for a time obscured by the circumstances of his life. For nearly ten years he acted as a railway engineer; and as they were the years from 1837 to 1846, he saw great part of the process which revolutionised the internal means of communication in England. More than almost anything else, such an experience was calculated to make a man contented with what in the common English and not in the Aristotelian sense is called the practical; but Spencer turned from it at the earliest opportunity. From 1848 to 1853 he was sub-editor of the *Economist*, and for some years after he was an active contributor to the *Westminster Review*. More and more he devoted himself to the exclusive study of philosophy, and by the year 1860 he had planned the Synthetic Philosophy,

to the accomplishment of which the rest of his life was devoted. His earlier works, *Social Statics* (1851), *Over-Legislation* (1854) &c., may be regarded as preliminary studies for this system, and his *Principles of Psychology* (1855), in an enlarged and developed form, actually became part of it. As a complete system the Synthetic Philosophy is composed of five parts: *First Principles* (1862), *Principles of Biology* (1864–1867), the revised *Principles of Psychology* (1870–1872), *Principles of Sociology* (1876–1896) and *Principles of Ethics* (1892–1893).

Most important and also most questionable of all are the *First Principles*, with their fundamental division into the Unknowable and the Knowable. Spencer, as is well known, derived this distinction directly from Mansel's Bampton Lectures, and so mediately from Hamilton's philosophy of the conditioned, and it has been already touched upon in the last chapter. The criticisms are obvious and have been frequently repeated. If a thing is unknown what is there to say about it? If we can even affirm that a thing exists, surely it is not completely unknown; and if it were, surely it would be a most unsatisfactory foundation on which to base all knowledge, a flimsy material on which to rest the imposing structure of the Synthetic Philosophy. Intellectually, the Unknowable = nothing, and Spencer is therefore placed in the absurd position of devoting half of the first and most vital part of his philosophy to sheer vacuity. But of course the Unknowable purely as such would not have furnished material even for a sentence, and Spencer is in reality, though unconsciously, engaged in showing that the Unknowable is not only in some sense knowable but known. It is really a kind of *deus ex machina*, a new *Ding an sich*, a substratum for the dance of phenomena, whose dim tenuity is an advantage to the philosopher; for from such very raw material anything whatever may be fashioned.

The whole philosophy of Spencer is really contained in the *First Principles*, but it is obvious that these principles are important to him only for the sake of the subsequent parts. His real design is to trace the operation of the single principle of evolution from the simplest to the most complex forms; and hence obviously the progress from biology to psychology, sociology and

ethics. Darwin's design was large, but he confined himself to the origin of species; he had nothing to say about the origin of life, he never professed to be master of any principle which would show how inorganic matter became organic. But Spencer believed that he could account for everything by means of the single law of the persistence of force. He regarded evolution as "the law of the continuous re-distribution of matter and motion"; a law which governs the inorganic equally with the organic, and which, we are to understand, continues unchanged in essence from the beginning of the universe to the end, if the universe can be said to have either beginning or end. If this could be shown, it would be a triumph which would dwarf the achievements even of Darwin and Newton. But in point of fact, though the scheme of the Synthetic Philosophy is nominally complete and the ten volumes originally promised are all in existence, there is really a gigantic gap in the system: there is no attempt to trace the evolution of the inorganic into the organic. Spencer excused this omission on the plea that the matter was less pressing than that of the higher grades of evolution; but the plea will not bear examination. For a philosophy which explains all things as the outcome of one continuous process, it is just this which is the most pressing of all. Others as well as Spencer could show good grounds for believing that the more complex forms of life had been evolved from simpler forms, and some have done it more convincingly than he. But there was and is no plausible theory to account for the transition from that which has not life to that which has. Huxley towards the close of his life declared his belief that the gap would ultimately be bridged; but this was an act of faith, and he confessed that the feat had not yet been done. Biologists, then, were groping in the dark in vain; and the only rational explanation of Spencer's omission to throw light upon the problem is that he had none to throw. Here, therefore, at the very foundation of his philosophy, lies an immense assumption. The living and the lifeless are still two severed worlds, and the attempt to explain the universe on mechanical principles is so far foiled.

Behind evolution itself there lies, for Spencer, the Persistence of Force, from which he says the phenomena of evolution have

to be deduced. On this point Professor Ward's criticism seems to be unanswerable: "So far from accounting for all the phenomena of evolution, the doctrine of the persistence of energy alone will not account for a single one. The celestial, organic, social, and other phenomena which make up what Mr Spencer calls cosmic evolution are so many series of qualitative changes. But the conservation of energy is not a law of change, still less a law of qualities. It does not initiate events, and furnishes absolutely no clue to qualitative diversity. It is entirely a quantitative law. When energy is transformed, there is precise equivalence between the new form and the old; but of the circumstances determining transformation and of the possible kinds of transformation the principle tells us nothing. If energy is transferred, then the system during work loses precisely what some other part of the universe gains; but again the principle tells us nothing of the conditions of such transferences[1]."

It is singular that the century which, of all in human history, has witnessed the greatest development of specialised knowledge, should also have produced two of the boldest of encyclopædic thinkers. Comte in France and Spencer in England without hesitation took all knowledge for their province, and the very audacity of their attempt awed contemporaries and helped to win for them a position which can never be wholly lost. For there is an element of greatness in the very magnitude of their schemes, and even if their doctrines were completely rejected the mere fact that they were able to conceive them is a proof of rare endowment. But time has certainly obscured the fame of Comte, and it seems to be in process of obscuring that of Spencer too. Men begin to suspect that the strain put upon persistency of force is greater than it will bear, and that the word evolution is pronounced like a sort of magic incantation. The whole process is suspiciously simple; and when we ask what has really been explained by this deduction of the universe from the law of the persistence of force, we find that the true answer is, Nothing whatever. Life is as much a mystery as ever; we do not know how it originates or what it is. The process is not only

[1] *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, i. 213–214.

not explained, it is not even described: there is only the assertion, wrapped in a haze of vague technical or *quasi*-technical words, that the process has taken place. How, why, under what impulse, these are questions to which there is really no answer.

Spencer, it may be suspected, falls between two stools. Living in an age of men of science, he is not sufficiently scientific; the author of a new theory of the universe, he is not sufficiently metaphysical. It is remarkable that he does not satisfy the specialists either on the one side or on the other. Literary men like R. L. Stevenson and Lafcadio Hearn are impressed by him: the latter has no doubt that Spencer is the wisest man in all the world: his whole intellectual life moves round the Synthetic Philosophy like a satellite round its sun. So too he commends himself to a people like the Japanese, who are just beginning to familiarise themselves with the conceptions in which the western world has been steeped for generations. When they turn to the West for advice, it is of Spencer that they ask it,—and they get much that is extremely sagacious and far-sighted. But with the specialists the case is different. Men like Professors Ritchie and Ward show the unsoundness of Spencer's metaphysic; physicists and biologists lament that he is not more accomplished in science. "If," says Darwin, "he had trained himself to observe more, even if at the expense, by the law of balancement, of some loss of thinking power, he would have been a wonderful man[1]." With all his defects he was a wonderful man, and if he has left the riddle of the universe unread, he has but failed in common with all who have attempted the task.

The proverb, the half is greater than the whole, could hardly be better illustrated than by a comparison of Spencer with Darwin. Partly because he attempted less the latter accomplished much more. The two great evolutionists were not much indebted to one another. Already, before the publication of *The Origin of Species*, Spencer was an evolutionist, and in the early fifties, when Darwin was absorbed in the work, Spencer was one of the very few whom he found already convinced of the truth of the principle. In consequence Spencer's evolutionism retains to the

[1] *Life of Darwin*, iii. 56.

end traces of its Lamarckian parentage. On the other hand, Darwin of course was in no sense indebted to Spencer for the idea. It had dawned upon him before he ever knew Spencer and before Spencer had published anything upon the subject. But apart from the question of originality, what distinguished Darwin from all others who had handled or who were handling the idea, was his explicit theory of the manner in which evolution had operated, and the masterly marshalling of evidence in support of it.

Charles Darwin (1809–1882) had through his grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, a kind of hereditary right to the theory of evolution. His love of science was early developed. The seven years which he spent at Shrewsbury Grammar School, where the boys nicknamed him "Gas" on account of his chemical experiments, were almost wasted, because the school was classical and set no value on gas. His loathing of the sight of blood turned him from his father's profession. Two operations which he witnessed (before the days of chloroform) "fairly haunted him for many a long year." He afterwards lamented as an "irremediable evil" that he had never learnt to dissect.

After two years at Edinburgh, therefore, he was sent in 1828 to Cambridge, with the object of preparing to be a clergyman. If there be truth in phrenology he would have been a good one, for he was pronounced in after years to possess "the bump of reverence developed enough for ten priests." The results he had carried up from Edinburgh were chiefly negative. Of the lectures there, he says some were "fearful to remember," others "incredibly dull"; and he shunned lectures as much as possible at Cambridge, though he liked those of Henslow on botany. At the end of three years he took a humble pass degree; and he declares the time at Cambridge to have been wasted, academically, as much as that at Edinburgh. He had, however, been training himself all the time. It is clear that the man of science is sometimes born, as well as the poet. At this period of his life Darwin had other tastes besides the love of science. Though he was utterly destitute of ear, his "backbone would sometimes shiver" listening to the anthem in King's College Chapel; and he read

the poets, and especially Shakespeare, with appreciation. He deeply regretted the complete loss of these tastes in later years. But his master-passion was science. The books by which he was most profoundly influenced were scientific,—Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* and Herschel's *Introduction to the Study of Natural Philosophy*. At Edinburgh he had gone trawling with the Newhaven fishermen, and by the law which draws like to like he had become the friend of Macgillivray the ornithologist. At Cambridge he was a collector of beetles, and even then showed a certain originality in devising new methods of capture.

The turning-point in Darwin's career was his selection as naturalist on the *Beagle*. He owed the post to the friendship of Henslow; and he almost lost it owing to the shape of his nose. Fitz-Roy, he says, "doubted whether any one with my nose could possess sufficient energy and determination for the voyage[1]." Fitz-Roy, however, resolved to risk taking the owner of the nose, and in December, 1831, Darwin embarked on the memorable voyage from which he returned five years later with an immense mass of fresh information, and with the germs of the theory of evolution seething in his brain. He had laboured and thought so intensely that on his return his father, whom he describes as the most acute observer he ever saw, remarked that the very shape of his head was altered[2].

Darwin's own development was now nearly complete, and, for the future, the landmarks of his life are the dates of the publication of his books. For five or six years after his return he lived principally in London. In 1839 he married; and in 1842 he removed to Down, in Kent, his home for the rest of his life. Unfortunately, the voyage which had done so much for him intellectually had seriously impaired his constitution. For the rest of his life he was more or less an invalid, and all his work was accomplished under that disadvantage.

[1] Perhaps Darwin had this incident in his mind when, years afterwards, he asked Lyell, in answer to an objection against his theory, whether he supposed that the shape of his (Darwin's) nose was designed.

[2] It is interesting to notice that Buckle called attention to the way in which thought had developed his own forehead, originally rather low, ultimately very high and broad.

Darwin's first task after his return to England was the preparation of his *Journal of Researches*, which, originally published in 1839 as part of Fitz-Roy's narrative, was, six years later, issued independently in a second edition. Its immediate success "tickled" the author's "vanity," and its long-continued popularity surprised him; but they can be explained without difficulty. Simple, direct, suggestive, full of matter, it is a book which cannot be read without interest. It is a storehouse of facts, but it is also something more. Darwin had passed the stage of the mere collector, and had learnt that "science consists in grouping facts so that general laws or conclusions can be drawn from them[1]." The *Journal* was rather the place for facts than for the enunciation of great principles; but the charm of it lies in the feeling that the writer regards every fact as something having a meaning which it is his business to discover. It is a glimpse into a great man's mind in process of formation. The self-revelation on Darwin's part is unconscious, or at least is unintentional; many readers are probably but dimly aware of it; yet the fact that the revelation takes place gives the *Journal* a peculiar fascination. In style, the book is just Darwin himself,—the simple, modest, courteous gentleman, wholly free from self-consciousness, concerned only to say what he has to say clearly and briefly, neither desirous nor, in his own opinion, capable of fine writing.

Few men of science have written so well as Darwin. With no pretence to the brilliancy of Huxley, he had an extraordinary power of making plain even to the uninstructed the meaning of technicalities. Doubtless his utter fidelity to truth helped towards this result. His earnest wish to say exactly what he saw and knew necessitated care in the choice of language. Probably his diffidence helped also: he had no confident belief in his own power to convince, he felt that he could only hope to do so by the exercise of the utmost care. And part of this care must go to the formation of style. "No nigger with lash over him," he says, "could have worked harder at clearness than I have done[2]." He had his reward. It seems to be true that Darwin had not by nature the gift of style. His is formed by sheer hard work; and

[1] *Life of Darwin*, i. 57. [2] *ibid.* ii. 156.

it becomes better with practice. Though the *Journal of Researches* is a charming book, the English of it is decidedly inferior to that of the book on earthworms; and though the difficulties of *The Origin of Species* are mainly due to the extreme condensation of thought, it too is not free from occasional obscurity and clumsiness of expression.

From Darwin's marriage till the removal to Down, the greater part of the time during which he was well enough to do anything was devoted to the *Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs* (1842). "No other work of mine," he says, "was begun in so deductive a spirit as this, for the whole theory was thought out on the west coast of South America, before I had seen a true coral reef[1]"; but he adds that for two years previously he had been incessantly observing and reflecting upon the effects of elevation, denudation and the deposition of sediment. Subsidence is necessarily suggested by elevation, and the growth of coral comes in to play the part of the deposition of sediment. In truth, the *Coral Reefs* is no exception to Darwin's ordinary method. It differs from the others, not in the use of deduction, nor in any special prominence given to it, but only in the fact that deduction was so prominent at the beginning. All the greater works of Darwin illustrate what Mill calls the deductive method. They are based upon an immense accumulation of facts, the inductive foundation; these are grouped together and explained by some great speculative principle, like the theory of the coral reefs, or of natural selection, or of the action of earthworms in the formation of vegetable mould; and finally, the theory is tested by its agreement with phenomena. It is the largeness and the luminousness of the deductive principles that give the speculations of Darwin their fascination; it is the width of the induction that gives them their solidity. This speculation as to coral reefs, if it be not an accepted dogma of science, is at any rate, sixty years after its promulgation, still a subject of enquiry, and is still helpful to thought.

Darwin had already begun the great work of his life. His first note-book for facts bearing upon the origin of species was opened in July, 1837, immediately after he had finished the writing of his

[1] *Life*, i. 70.

Journal. But already he had "long reflected" on the subject; and although in the *Journal* he occasionally uses language implying special creation, it is clear that before the end of the voyage of the *Beagle*, his belief in the traditional view was shaken. He had at this date no theory as to the manner in which the mutation of species had taken place; he only guided his observations by the general hypothesis that species might not be permanent and unalterable entities. In October, 1838, he read Malthus on the *Principle of Population*, and the idea dawned upon him that here lay the solution. Given a state of matters in which population increases faster than food, there necessarily follows a struggle for existence. Variations, however caused, do occur; and in this struggle favourable variations will tend to be preserved and unfavourable ones to be eliminated. That is Natural Selection, or the Survival of the Fittest.

No scientific thinker was ever more bold than Darwin; few if any have known better how to combine caution with boldness. Though the theory was now clear in his mind, in order to avoid prejudice, he refrained for nearly four years from writing it. His first abstract was written in June, 1842. Two years later it was much enlarged. In 1856 he began writing on a scale three or four times as large as that adopted in *The Origin of Species*; and yet even this was only an abstract of the materials which he had collected. He had got about half way through this task when in 1858 he received from Mr A. R. Wallace an essay *On the Tendency of Varieties to depart indefinitely from the Original Type*[1]. The sequel is well known. An abstract from Darwin's MS. was published at the same time with Mr Wallace's essay; and the former set himself at once to re-write his book on a smaller scale. *The Origin of Species* was published in November, 1859.

> "So thought on thought is piled till some great truth
> Is loosened, and the nations echo round."

In the whole history of science there is no better example than that afforded by *The Origin of Species* of the patient piling up of facts, observations and thoughts. The author was fifty, and he

[1] It is remarkable that Mr Wallace, like Darwin himself, had found the key to the problem of evolution in Malthus.

had devoted twenty years of his life consciously, and the rest of it unconsciously, to this great end. Neither have the nations ever echoed more loudly with the result. The theory of the evolution of species was a great constructive idea; but it was also destructive, and it came close home to all sorts of men. In the first place, it ran directly counter to all the orthodox views of religion, as they then were. Genesis distinctly states that the world was created in six days, and that the various kinds of living things, plants and beasts and birds and fishes, were created during those days. There are probably few men over fifty who cannot remember the denunciations of the book for impiety and absurdity, which rang from the pulpits of England and Scotland; and the views expressed in print may still be read by those who care to examine the files of old journals. It had not then been discovered that the whole theory is contained in the Old Testament; and we may imagine that Darwin smiled, as grimly as it was in his nature to smile, when he wrote in his *Autobiography* that there had even appeared an essay in Hebrew to demonstrate this.

Hardly anything, as Galileo found to his cost, is apt to stir up so great excitement as the publication of a theory in real or apparent conflict with the accepted dogmas of religion. But in Darwin's case there was a prejudice still wider than this to struggle against. His view involves the doctrine of the pithecoid origin of mankind; and even among men of science there were many who loathed this. It is evident that some of Sedgwick's virulence against the *Vestiges* was due to this loathing. Lyell felt the prejudice powerfully, and it was probably the cause why in his *Antiquity of Man* he disappointed Darwin by the caution of his utterances. Mr Wallace's contention for a special treatment of humanity rests on a different ground; yet it is possible that that too has been influenced by the same feeling.

But the very strength of the opposition it excited was among the causes of the immediate success of *The Origin of Species*. Its friends were warm, its foes bitter, few were indifferent; and though the active friends were not at first numerous, there were among them some whose names commanded respect. All the three men whom Darwin had fixed upon beforehand as the judges

whose decision he would accept as the test of success or failure, were convinced by his arguments. Huxley's adhesion was especially important. "Poor dear Darwin," he says, "neither would nor could defend himself." Huxley therefore becomes, as he himself phrases it, "Darwin's bulldog," or, as he elsewhere says, "maid-of-all-work and gladiator-general of science." In the troubles which were to come he proved himself a very present help.

The story of the meeting of the British Association at Oxford in 1860 has been told by several eye-witnesses; and while there are numerous small discrepancies in their accounts, the main facts are beyond dispute. Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, as the champion of orthodoxy, made an attack upon the Darwinian theory, in the course of which he referred insolently to Huxley's descent from an ape, and apparently asked him whether it was on the grandfather's side or the grandmother's that he claimed that descent. "The Lord hath delivered him into mine hands," whispered Huxley to his neighbour, and he justified the quotation by his stinging retort. "I asserted," he said,—"and I repeat—that a man has no reason to be ashamed of having an ape for a grandfather. If there were an ancestor whom I should feel shame in recalling it would rather be a *man*—a man of restless and versatile intellect—who, not content with an equivocal success in his own sphere of activity, plunges into scientific questions with which he has no real acquaintance, only to obscure them by an aimless rhetoric, and distract the attention of his hearers from the real point at issue by eloquent digressions and skilled appeals to religious prejudice[1]." This reply produced an immense sensation in the arena in which the battle was fought; nor did the effect stop there. Darwinism, which was to have been pulverised, was proved to be more than able to hold its own; and Huxley was drawn from relative obscurity into the fore-front of the struggle.

After fifty years of effort, immensely stimulated by Darwin's own speculation, there is a disposition in many quarters to modify

[1] *Life of Huxley*, i. 185. No perfectly accurate version of Huxley's retort exists; but that quoted in the text, which is J. R. Green's, is probably the best. Huxley, however, disowned the word "equivocal."

the view of evolution expressed in *The Origin of Species*. There are Mendelists and Mutationists as well as Darwinians. But even if the particular theory of evolution embodied in *The Origin of Species* were disproved or shown to be highly improbable, the name of Darwin would still remain among the most memorable in the annals of science. The idea of evolution is far greater than any theory of the manner in which evolution has operated; and Darwin has practically made this idea his own. Others, as we have seen, had enunciated it before. But they left it bare; he alone has supported it with evidence which, after half a century, men are still examining, sifting and adding to. The consequence is that he has worked a complete revolution in thought. Before the publication of *The Origin of Species* Darwin himself could find no naturalist who doubted the permanence of species: now, all are evolutionists, though not all are Darwinians. No such change has taken place since the days of Newton; and even Newton's great law did not touch mankind as closely as Darwin's.

All Darwin's subsequent books take their place in relation to this great central work. *The Descent of Man* (1871) may be regarded as its completion, and the others as buttresses or outworks. Darwin had seen from the first that the law of descent which governed other animals must hold with respect to man as well, and he had all along been collecting facts in illustration of his view. But in *The Origin of Species* his object was, not to trace the evolution of either man or any other animal, but to explain and illustrate the laws under which, as he believed, evolution had taken place. In *The Descent of Man* he applies those laws specifically to the human race; and it is here that he parts company with his great co-discoverer, Mr A. R. Wallace. Mr Wallace believes indeed that man is descended from the lower forms of life, but he holds that "natural selection could only have endowed the savage with a brain a little superior to that of an ape"; and he argues that some other principle must be supposed in order to account for the higher moral and intellectual powers of humanity. Darwin thought, and the great majority of naturalists agree with him, that the difficulty of accounting for the higher faculties of man was far less than the

difficulty involved in the conception that while all nature had developed under the action of one law, just at the end that law was superseded by a wholly different one. It seems reasonable to doubt whether, if the supernatural does not govern the whole of life, its introduction to explain the last stage is necessary. It is however worth remembering that Darwinism is silent as to the *origin* of life and as to the cause of variation.

The respectful reception of *The Descent of Man* was one of the evidences of the progress of the theory of evolution. The day for mere abuse was gone by; and though the theory expounded was even more distasteful to average opinion than that expressed in the earlier book, in nearly every quarter worthy of attention it was treated as a thing to be temperately discussed. Although Huxley was called into the field once more against the old adversary, the *Quarterly Review*, he remarks upon the general absence of "the mixture of ignorance and insolence which at first characterised a large proportion of the attacks with which he [Darwin] was assailed[1]."

None of Darwin's other books is comparable in importance to these; and though they all have an interest, and nearly all illustrate some engaging characteristic of the man, they may be left aside as things belonging to the domain of science rather than to literature. That which is perhaps in scientific importance almost the least of them is, however, an exception. Whatever possesses the power of fascination is literature, and *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms* (1881) is fascinating. Darwin thought the enthusiasm with which it was received "almost laughable"; but in truth it was only reasonable and right. The book is admirably written, and it is perhaps the most striking illustration in English of the importance of the unimportant. It is "little drops of water, little grains of sand," illuminated and glorified by the light of genius; a creature so low in the scale as the earthworm becomes one of the great agents in moulding the world.

This was Darwin's last work. He had lived to see his theory accepted by a large proportion of naturalists and respectfully considered by all; and he was known as the greatest force in

[1] *Life of Huxley*, i. 364.

modern thought. He owed this great position to a rare combination of qualities,—the capacity for patient and accurate observation, united with a powerful and daring imagination capable of conceiving the largest generalisations, and both with a complete sanity of mind which perceives how unsatisfying are mere facts so long as they are isolated, and how misleading may be imagination if it is not brought to the test of facts. Many have had as great powers of observation as Darwin, a few have been as largely gifted with imagination; but not more than a mere handful of the greatest have possessed the two gifts in such harmonious combination.

It is an easy transition from Darwin to the great disciple who, next to him, did most for the diffusion of evolutionary ideas. Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895) has not Darwin's claim to recognition in a history of literature on the score of the supreme greatness of his contribution to thought; but he has the claim that he was himself a man of letters almost as much as a man of science. Everything he wrote has the literary flavour to such a degree that he has successfully undergone one of the severest of tests, the collection of his lectures, addresses and miscellaneous articles into volumes. In the best and most honourable sense he was a populariser of science. Himself among the profoundest in scientific knowledge, he had in an unsurpassed degree the power of making what he said or wrote intelligible and perspicuous. In this respect he contrasts pleasantly with many writers on science, because these have seldom studied the art of expression. His style is the antithesis of that which, in one of his bright and sparkling letters, he ascribes to a fellow-worker in science. "From a literary point of view, my dear friend, you remind me of nothing so much as a dog going home. He has a goal before him which he will certainly reach sooner or later, but first he is on this side of the road, and now on that; anon, he stops to scratch at an ancient rat-hole, or maybe he catches sight of another dog, a quarter of a mile behind, and bolts off to have a friendly, or inimical sniff. In fact, his course is...(here a tangled maze is drawn) not ——[1]." Huxley himself never forgot that a straight

[1] *Life*, i. 415.

line is the shortest distance between any two points; and to reach his point he took the straight line. He had early convinced himself of the importance of expression, and he studied it. According to his own account, he was deficient in facility[1]; but we may assume that his standard was a lofty one, for his published writings give the impression of a perfectly easy flow. His high success was probably due to his concentration on a single point, lucidity. Valuing the manner for the sake of the matter, he doubtless believed that if he could be clear all the other graces would be added unto him; and he was right. Never aiming at fine writing, or attempting eloquence such as Ruskin's, Huxley in his writings impresses us as a building does which is destitute of ornament, but beautiful by reason of its outline and proportions. The perfect fitness of his words and phrases for their purpose is their beauty. But though there is no ornament for its own sake, the style is illuminated by the brilliance of the writer's wit. He knew well the value of a telling phrase, and the gift of coining phrases was his by nature. It is this which makes his letters, as well as his writings intended for publication, among the most racy of the last half century. The wit is invariably illuminative: take for example his admirable simile written to Darwin, when roused by the criticisms directed against the discourse *On the Physical Basis of Life*: "A good book is comparable to a piece of meat, and fools are as flies who swarm to it, each for the purpose of depositing and hatching his own particular maggot of an idea[2]." He is felicitous in metaphor and phrase: "There is always a Cape Horn in one's life that one either weathers or wrecks one's self on[3]."

On this basis of natural gifts and with this deliberate training in the art of luminous expression Huxley worked. He added to it, of course, unsparing devotion to his scientific studies. This would have been necessary on his theory of style alone, for the indispensable condition precedent to saying a thing clearly is to have something to say. It was indispensable also from Huxley's moral theory. The virtue he loved above all others was truth.

[1] *Life*, i. 118. [2] *ibid.* 300.
[3] *ibid.* 117.

Carlyle taught him to hate humbug, and his own nature chimed in with the teaching of Carlyle. In a letter written on the death of his eldest child to Kingsley—one of the noblest that ever passed between man and man—he bids men welcome to call him "atheist, infidel and all the other usual hard names." But, he adds, "one thing people shall not call me with justice and that is—a liar[1]." And in the solitude of his own study, on the last night of the year, while waiting for the birth of this very child, we find him writing: "To smite all humbugs, however big; to give a nobler tone to science; to set an example of abstinence from petty personal controversies, and of toleration for everything but lying; to be indifferent as to whether the work is recognised as mine or not, so long as it is done:—are these my aims[2]?" Huxley's life shows that they were his aims. His many controversies were never on petty personal points, and though he had a healthy enough personal ambition, he always subordinated it to that love of truth which was the keystone of his character.

The resolution "to smite all humbugs, however big," promised a life of combat; and the promise was redeemed. Though he was accustomed to say that he never but twice began a controversy, it is evident that Huxley loved fighting. And in controversy he was unmatched. It was this, and his ability to interest and to win large audiences, which made him an ideal complement to Darwin, who was both by disposition and by reason of his ill health unfitted for such work. From the time of the Oxford meeting of the British Association onwards, Huxley constituted himself the protagonist of evolution. For this, the chief work of his life, he had been preparing himself for nearly twenty years. During the voyage of the *Rattlesnake* and in the years afterwards he had gradually piled up a great mass of scientific knowledge; and the circumstances of his life had diversified the knowledge beyond his own wish or purpose. To win his own bread he found it necessary to make a profound study of palæontology, although originally he "did not care for fossils[3]." Without this study of the fossils his work for evolution could never have been done.

[1] *Life*, i. 221. [2] *ibid.* 151.
[3] *ibid.* 132.

That work again was its own reward. Darwin's debt to Huxley was great, but Huxley's to Darwin was greater still. Huxley was a man of essentially philosophical intellect. He early studied Hamilton's philosophy of the conditioned; he mastered the positive philosophy, and "put it away into one of the pigeon-holes of his brain" till it was wanted; his book on Hume was written *con amore*; and he plunged with avidity into the Jesuit Suarez in order to answer Mivart. He looked upon facts as the raw material of philosophy, things indispensable indeed, but valuable only for the conclusions that could be drawn from them. Consequently the great central idea of *The Origin of Species* was to him priceless. It unified the various fragments of his knowledge, and gave a new meaning to the fossils which made them once for all objects of intense interest.

In other ways as well as in disposition Huxley was the complement of Darwin. He was strong in knowledge where Darwin was comparatively weak. The latter laments his own ignorance of anatomy: Huxley was a trained and accomplished anatomist, whose knowledge enabled him to make important additions to the evidence for Darwinism, and to combat criticisms with success. For example, it enabled him both to give and to justify a direct contradiction of the assertion of Richard Owen at the famous Oxford meeting of the British Association in 1860, that the difference between the brain of man and that of the highest ape was greater than the difference between the brains of the highest and the lowest of the quadrumana.

Huxley's earliest writings were of purely technical interest, and were chiefly the fruit of that voyage in the *Rattlesnake*, which holds to his life the same relation as the voyage of the *Beagle* holds to Darwin's. On the scientific value of such writings only men of science are entitled to an opinion. Some of them have shown a tendency to depreciate Huxley; but Haeckel in 1874 emphatically declared his work on the comparative anatomy of vertebrates to be the only thing which could "be compared with the otherwise incomparable investigations of Carl Gegenbaur[1]"; and the editors of *The Scientific Memoirs of T. H. Huxley*, Sir

[1] Quoted in the *Library of Literary Criticism*, viii. 324.

Michael Foster and Professor E. Ray Lankester, pronounce him to be "in some respects the most original and most fertile in discovery of all his fellow-workers in the same branch of science[1]."

In *Man's Place in Nature* (1863), Huxley with characteristic boldness devoted himself to the most unpopular aspect of an unpopular theory; for he was the first frankly and undisguisedly to apply the Darwinian doctrine to man. The application had been plainly suggested in *The Origin of Species*; but it was not within the scope of that book to carry out the suggestion. *Man's Place in Nature* was, of course, abused,—but was unharmed by the abuse. Writing a preface to the reprint, thirty years later, the author could note with pardonable satisfaction that it had "achieved the fate, which is the euthanasia of a scientific work, of being inclosed among the rubble of the foundations of later knowledge, and forgotten."

The years immediately following are filled with active scientific work and with an active polemic. Some of the fruits of this polemic, along with other things, were included in the volume of *Lay Sermons* (1870), which won an audience wider, probably, than any other of Huxley's writings,—an audience, however, attracted in no small measure by opposition rather than by agreement. The keenest interest was concentrated on the paper on the *Physical Basis of Life*, the substance of which had shortly before been delivered as an address in Edinburgh. Having, as he humorously explains in the prefatory letter to Tyndall, intended the paper for a plain statement of a great tendency of modern biology, with a protest against what is commonly called materialism, he found himself "generally credited with having invented 'protoplasm' in the interests of 'materialism.'" Huxley's pugnacity—a trait about which Darwin gently warned him, while Huxley humorously disclaimed it—had caused him to be regarded as more Darwinian than Darwin. His caution was forgotten, his boldness was remembered to his prejudice. His contention that until varieties unfertile when crossed could be produced by selection, the proof of Darwinism was incomplete, scarcely counted for righteousness; while the fact that he brushed aside and rejected all arguments

[1] Quoted in the *Library of Literary Criticism*, viii. 327.

tending to set man in a place apart from the rest of the animal kingdom, made a profound impression. When Darwin, moving, like the stars, *ohne hast, ohne rast*, produced *The Descent of Man*, he found that a great part of the odium had already been expended on his "bull-dog"; and Huxley was chivalrous enough to rejoice that it was so.

The strong firm thread of scientific work in laboratories and lecture-rooms which ran through all the life of Huxley was little known to the public except when it furnished matter for some essay or address, usually controversial. Occasionally he made mistakes; and when he did the consequence of his pugnacity became evident. His error about "Bathybius" was in itself trifling; but it was seized upon with avidity, and small allowance was made for the author's manly recantation. But besides being a man of science, Huxley was a public character, serving on many commissions, and doing excellent work for science, for education and for society. His place in literature however depends upon those essays and lectures in which science is brought to bear upon the interpretation of life, or in which the critical intellect, trained through long years of labour, is turned to the examination of old beliefs. Such is the general character of those *Collected Essays* gathered from the papers of many years and reissued near the close of Huxley's life. The titles are a fair index to the contents of the volumes,—*Science and Education*, *Science and Hebrew Tradition*, *Science and Christian Tradition*, &c. The volume on *Hume* (1879), which Huxley undertook and wrote with zest for the *English Men of Letters* series, is of the same class; for Hume supplied a foundation to the empiricists of the nineteenth century.

Many of the papers contained in these volumes have been criticised as somewhat wantonly polemical; and Huxley certainly felt the joy of battle. "I really can't give up tormenting *ces drôles*[1]," he says of one group of his controversial enemies. But through all the controversies he was steadily doing his real life-work. His function was, not merely to be the man of science, but to vindicate for scientific thought, and for all thought, complete and unfettered freedom. If the kind of criticism which Darwin originally met

[1] *Life*, ii. 269.

would be almost impossible now, the change is largely to be ascribed to Huxley. No one ever battled more valiantly for freedom of thought, or rather (since that could never be denied) for freedom to express thought; and under his controversies there always lay this or some other serious justification. On this plea he successfully defended his share in the later phase of the celebrated controversy with Gladstone, against a critic who objected that both he and Gladstone might employ their time better than in quarrelling about the Gadarene swine. If the swine, said Huxley, "were the only parties to the suit, I for my part should fully admit the justice of the rebuke. But the real issue is whether the men of the nineteenth century are to adopt the demonology of the men of the first century, as divinely revealed truth, or to reject it as degrading falsity[1]." Huxley might also have pleaded fairly that a man is justified in doing that which he can do supremely well. His gift for controversy has probably never been surpassed, and it has very rarely been equalled. During the thirty-five years from the encounter with Wilberforce to his death, Huxley was engaged in numberless literary and scientific battles, and in not one did he fail. Wherever he crossed swords with an antagonist—Wilberforce, or Owen, or Gladstone,—Huxley remained master of the field; and his manner of fighting the duel is a model which may be commended to the careful study of all who are minded to go and do likewise.

All the wonderful development of science along other lines must be left with the briefest notice. It does not belong to literature as the works of Darwin and of Huxley do. Great in his own sphere, a mathematician like Sir William Rowan Hamilton or a physicist like Lord Kelvin counts for little in the domain of letters. John Tyndall (1820–1893), indefinitely smaller than the latter as a man of science, had a far superior gift of expression. Michael Faraday (1791–1867) had that gift too, and did much to popularise chemistry; but neither he nor any of the others had that influence upon the substance of literature which the evolutionists and the geologists exercised. Still, their work lies behind literature, as it were, giving a tone of mind, holding

[1] *Collected Essays*, v. 414—quoted in the *Life of Huxley*, ii. 271.

up a standard of truth, helping to render much impossible which in earlier days seemed not only possible but necessary. One remarkable fact may be noted. As early as 1834 two of the men named, Hamilton and Faraday, seem to have had already some prevision of the most modern scientific conception of the nature of the external world. In a remarkable letter to his sister Hamilton expresses his pleasure in finding that Faraday from the side of induction and experiment had reached the same anti-material view that he himself had arrived at by deduction. Both apparently were disposed to reject the conception of atoms, and to regard matter rather as a centre of forces than as something fundamentally inert.

PART II

CREATIVE ART. A. POETRY

CHAPTER I

THE INTERREGNUM IN POETRY

In the temporary absence of any fresh "Kings of Song" about the close of the first and the beginning of the second quarters of the nineteenth century, a special interest attaches to the minor writers who in those discouraging years had the courage to meditate what usually proved a very thankless muse. The shadows of many coming events may be seen in the work of those poets of the interregnum. *The Christian Year* is so manifestly imbued with the spirit of the Tractarians that an effort of memory is needed to realise the fact that it was published six years before the birth of the Oxford Movement. Henry Taylor's *Isaac Comnenus* heralds a classical reaction from Byron; and it is curious that the reaction should be specially directed against him who had championed the classical school of the eighteenth century at a time when few had a word to say in its favour. Even before the Reform Bill, democracy begins to find voice in the *Corn Law Rhymes*. But above all, the revival of the Elizabethan spirit is manifest in Beddoes and Wells and Wade, who may be regarded as the product of the critical teaching of Coleridge, Lamb and Hazlitt. It is melancholy to reflect that while these men were silenced by neglect and indifference, "Satan" Montgomery was flourishing and spreading his branches until they were effectually pruned by the critical knife of Macaulay.

The "large-hearted Scot," Allan Cunningham (1784–1842), belongs essentially to the Revolutionary period; and so does the Quaker poet, Bernard Barton (1784–1849), who is more memorable for his friendship with Lamb and his connexion with

Edward FitzGerald than for his own pleasant but hardly inspired verse. Cunningham is in the line from Burns, Barton sometimes brings Cowper to mind. But there is one poet of those years, John Clare (1793–1864), who stands absolutely alone, a figure of singular interest, at once like and strangely unlike what a man of poetic gifts, in circumstances such as his, might be expected to be. He deserves careful consideration, not only for his pathetic story, but for the high poetic merit of his writings. Clare has found generous panegyrists, but their encomiums have failed to lift him to the position in the history of literature which he well deserves. Men are ready enough to praise and to wonder at humble aspirants for literary honours; but their praise is apt to have a touch of condescension, and Clare had not the force to show, like Burns in Edinburgh, that the condescension was uncalled for[1].

No other English poet has had quite so sad a life as Clare, though there is gloom enough in many, and that of a much smaller versifier, his contemporary William Thom (1798?–1848) of Inverury presents some points of resemblance. Thom tells his own pathetic story in *Rhymes and Recollections of a Handloom Weaver* (1844). Though the author of *The Blind Boy's Pranks* was clearly not a great poet, he was no ordinary man who, born and bred as Thom had been, could win from the well-known critic W. J. Fox the emphatic declaration that he had the richest vein of humour Fox had ever known. Thom, however, had some support from the tradition of his country, where verse-writing ploughmen and weavers have been numerous; Clare had none. The son of a day-labourer who, from failure of health, was forced to seek relief from his parish, Clare from the age of seven had to do such rural tasks as his years and strength permitted. He had had almost no education, but his zeal for knowledge led him, even in childhood, to undertake extra work in order that he might earn enough to pay the fee for an evening school. But his true education was drawn from nature, the love of which was inborn

[1] Since the paragraphs following were written Mr A. Symons has done a fresh service to English literature by re-editing the poems of Clare, with a sympathetic introduction. I have corrected the quotations by his text.

in him. Clare was fortunate in having this taste strengthened by the influence of an old woman of a type almost unknown in rural England, though it is occasionally to be met in Wales and in Scotland. She had a taste for verse, and a memory full of it; and from her the boy got his first ideas of what poetry is. At the age of thirteen he bought a copy of Thomson's *Seasons*; and it is Thomson's influence, more than that of any other poet, which is felt in his early pieces. But essentially they are original and independent; Clare's authorities were his ears and eyes. He wrote "with his eye on the object," as we should expect a man with so few books and so little training to do—if he wrote at all.

By the ignorant boors among whom he lived Clare's passion for scribbling was despised. His mother, who thought he was wasting his time, used the scraps of paper on which he had written his verses to light her fire; and he was dismissed from a lime-kiln on which he was employed, because he was suspected, rightly or wrongly, of neglecting his work in order to write. But the verses which his fellows held so cheap at last drew the attention of some men who were better instructed; and through them Clare's first volume, *Poems, descriptive of Rural Life*, was published in 1820. Southey criticised it generously in the *Quarterly Review*. Interest in the poet was roused, he was taken to London, and on the whole treated with wisdom as well as with kindness. A sum was raised, the interest of which—£45 a year—ought to have sufficed, with the supplement of his own labour, to keep a man in his position above want; and he returned to that rural life in which his whole soul was centred, and to the wife, "Patty of the Vale," whom he had married. But a shrewd observer, S. C. Hall, notes that "his huge, overburdening head might have dreamed dreams and seen visions, but obviously was not the throne of productive thought." He had neither much strength, nor much competence for the labour which was his destiny; and he fell under the influence of the prevailing vice of his country and class, drink. His mind gave way: probably the "huge, overburdening head" indicated a tendency to brain disease, as well as exceptional endowment. He was placed, first in a private asylum, and then in the County Lunatic Asylum of Northamptonshire, where he

spent the last twenty-two years of his life. In intervals of sanity he had expressed the wish to be buried in his native village of Helpstone, near Peterborough; and on his death a subscription was raised by the aid of which his wish was gratified.

Had Clare's first book of verse been also his last, that achievement of a man starved alike in body and in soul would have been sufficiently remarkable to win him a place far above Bloomfield. But it was followed by *The Village Minstrel* (1823) and the *Shepherd's Calendar* (1827). Even after his burial in the living tomb of the asylum, he continued to write, and, inexplicable as the fact is, his finest pieces date from that place. Christopher Smart and William Blake are the closest parallels. Not the least remarkable point about Clare is that he bears triumphantly a test under which even Burns breaks down. In his early verse Clare used dialect with some freedom; in his later writings he confined himself almost wholly to the diction of classical English; yet his poems lost nothing in ease and naturalness. He even ventured on imitations of some of the older English poets; and, strange to say, he succeeded. The success proves that his poetic gift was something more and greater than a narrow compass of "native wood-notes wild"; and the proof is clinched by the dignity, almost unsurpassed, of at least one of his pieces. Surely, if the overburdening head portended disease, that head was also the home of a genius which needs no excuse from circumstance, but demands homage simply on the ground of its own greatness. There are no better tests of a poet than the power to write a lyric, and the power to impress the reader with the sense of the dignity and greatness of the verse,—to write, in short, in "the grand style." The first of the two following quotations is a lyric of wonderful sweetness and charm; the second, for grandeur, would do honour to any poet of the nineteenth century. Clare's biographer, Martin, is not using words amiss when he calls it "a sublime burst of poetry." It is almost uncanny to find, in the poor poet of the asylum, a reminder of that most dauntless of souls, Emily Brontë.

"O the evening's for the fair, bonnie lassie O!
To meet the cooler air and join an angel there,
With the dark dishevelled hair,
Bonnie lassie O!

The bloom's on the brere, bonnie lassie O!
Oak apples on the tree; and wilt thou gang to see
The shed I've made for thee,
Bonnie lassie O!

'Tis agen the running brook, bonnie lassie O!
In a grassy nook hard by, with a little patch of sky,
And a bush to keep us dry,
Bonnie lassie O!

There's the daisy all the year, bonnie lassie O!
There's the king-cup bright as gold, and the speedwell never cold,
And the arum leaves unrolled,
Bonnie lassie O!

O meet me at the shed, bonnie lassie O!
With the woodbine peeping in, and the roses like thy skin
Blushing, thy praise to win,
Bonnie lassie O!

I will meet thee there at e'en, bonnie lassie O!
When the bee sips in the bean, and grey willow branches lean,
And the moonbeam looks between,
Bonnie lassie O!"

"I am! yet what I am who cares or knows?
My friends forsake me like a memory lost;
I am the self-consumer of my woes,
They rise and vanish, an oblivious host,
Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost;
And yet I am! and live with shadows tost

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
Into the living sea of waking dreams,
Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
And e'en the dearest—that I loved the best—
Are strange—nay, rather stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod;
For scenes where woman never smil'd or wept;
There to abide with my creator, GOD,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept:
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie;
The grass below—above the vaulted sky."

There was one other poet, Ebenezer Elliott (1781–1849), who during the greater part of his life stood almost as much alone

as Clare, but who, unlike Clare, left heirs to carry on his work. Like Clare too, Elliott belongs to the class of unlettered poets, and in youth he was only a little less straitened in circumstances than the poor labourer's son. Like Clare again, he found in Thomson his earliest poetical model. But here almost all resemblance between the two ceases. Elliott was strong where Clare was weak, and what in the latter bred a gentle melancholy, roused the former to a *saeva indignatio* almost as intense as Swift's.

In all Elliott's verse there are just two notes,—a keen sense of natural beauty and a profound feeling for man. Elliott was first stirred to interest in the beauty of nature by the picture of a primrose in Sowerby's *English Botany*. This sent him from the ironworks among which his life was passed to wander along the streams and over the moors of Yorkshire; and the inspiration of Thomson's *Seasons*, acting upon what he saw there, made him a poet. His earliest piece, the *Vernal Walk*, was written at the age of seventeen, contemporaneously with the *Lyrical Ballads*. Elliott hardly knew what "the return to nature" was, but he felt the impulse no less than Wordsworth and Coleridge. As a nature poet he is true but not great, and though he does not deserve complete oblivion, he would hardly be remembered for that alone. His verse, if less faulty than Clare's, is also less spontaneous, and his touch is not so sure; for Clare's whole life was a communion with nature, while Elliott knew it only by glimpses.

This youthful outburst was followed by twenty years of silence. In his early manhood Elliott was too fully occupied in the struggle for life to indulge his taste for verse. Long years of frustrated effort were at last crowned with success; for Elliott had, as he claims in *A Poet's Epitaph*, "a hand to do, a head to plan." When hope grew brighter, he began once more to write. The *Vernal Walk* itself was not published till 1821. Two years later came *Love: a Poem*; and then, in rapid succession, *The Ranter* (1827), *Corn-Law Rhymes* (1828) and *The Village Patriarch* (1829).

Elliott's daily contact with the life of the poor, his intimate acquaintance with their sufferings, and his own long struggle from poverty to affluence, had left deep marks on a nature originally

sensitive and sympathetic, but imperfectly controlled. Without losing his love of nature, he became far more emphatically the poet of man. He is above all the Corn-Law Rhymer; and it was as such that Carlyle hailed him in an essay of considerable length, printed in the *Edinburgh Review*, in which he likens the poet's work to "hues of joy and harmony, painted out of troublous tears." Elliott knew "the tragic heart of towns"; and his name will live in literature as that of one of the first poets of modern democracy. His nervous organisation made him keenly sensitive to the evils and the suffering which he saw around him, and in fierce wrath he thundered for a remedy. He has glaring faults: he often mistakes mere abuse for vigour and ill-temper for strength; but the very intensity which leads him wrong raises him on occasion to lofty heights: the light which leads astray is, after all, "light from heaven."

There is in Elliott a remarkable combination of keen vision with complete blindness. He sees with crystal clearness one aspect of the eternal antithesis between wealth and poverty, another he does not see at all. The view which he takes is different from that which has been most commonly taken in recent years. We are familiar enough with the conflict between employer and workman; but to Elliott the two are fellow-sufferers, and the indignation which fires his verse is directed against the landowner, not against the master. "Let us contrast," he says in a note to *The Ranter*, "the fortunes of the owner [of the land] with those of his neighbour, the patient, long-eared iron master. The capital of the latter is reduced from £100,000 to £10,000, and he would be glad to receive $2\frac{1}{2}$ % on the reduced sum. Yet he maintains scores of families, while the unproductive, complaining landowner, without risk, and without exertion, is obtaining about forty times his profits." The struggles against the introduction of machinery had shown, before Elliott's day, how real, under the wages system, is the conflict between capital and labour, and how bitter it may easily become; but there is no hint of this in Elliott's verse. To him, as *A Poet's Epitaph* shows, there are two classes of the rich: "the rich who make the poor man's little more"; and, in contrast with these, "the rich who take

from plunder'd labour's store." The former are the employers, the latter the landowners. In the deeply pathetic "Child, is thy father dead?" master and man are represented as partners in misfortune. The father "clams" thrice a week; and then the significant question is asked, "Why did his master break?"

There is a great deal of unconscious prejudice in this antithesis between the classes of the rich. Himself an ironmaster moved by the best motives towards his workmen, Elliott sees the master in a rosy light, and ignores the possible conflict between his interest and the interest of his employee. He is also greatly influenced by the circumstances of the time. The long wars had left England strained and exhausted; and the system of protection helped to make bread excessively dear at a time when the poor had little with which to pay for it. Matters were made worse by an administration of the poor-laws which had raised the rates for relief inordinately. It is impossible to determine how far, under the conditions of production and of transport then prevailing, even free trade in corn would have proved effectual as a remedy. But when many of the people were starving, and still more were undergoing the moral degradation of poor relief, a system which laid a crushing tax upon the most necessary article of food was indefensible. Elliott was one of the first who not only saw this, but devoted himself heart and soul to the task of reform. The "bread-tax" became to him an obsession. He traced to it all the sufferings of the time, he became blind to every other source of evil; and his profound pity and fierce anger made him the lyrist of the cause. This obsession made him narrow—but also intense and vivid. It inspired his masterpiece, the grand *Battle Song* of modern democracy:—

"Day, like our souls, is fiercely dark;
What then? 'Tis day!
We sleep no more; the cock crows—hark!
To arms! away!

They come! they come! the knell is rung
Of us or them;
Wide o'er their march the pomp is flung
Of gold and gem.

What collar'd hound of lawless sway,
To famine dear—
What pension'd slave of Attila
Leads in the rear?

Come they from Scythian wilds afar,
Our blood to spill?
Wear they the livery of the Czar?
They do his will.

Nor tassell'd silk, nor epaulet,
Nor plume, nor torse—
No splendour gilds, all sternly met,
Our foot and horse.

But, dark and still, we inly glow,
Condens'd in ire!
Strike, tawdry slaves, and ye shall know
Our gloom is fire.

In vain your pomp, ye evil powers,
Insults the land;
Wrongs, vengeance, and *the cause* are ours,
And God's right hand!

Madmen! they trample into snakes
The wormy clod!
Like fire, beneath their feet awakes
The sword of God!

Behind, before, above, below,
They rouse the brave;
Where'er they go, they make a foe,
Or find a grave."

This spirit was the legacy of the French Revolution, and Elliott's battle-song might have been the *Marseillaise* of an English version of it. The history of Chartism proves that there wanted only the spark to set the fuel aflame. The passing of the danger was due to the united wisdom of all classes, in which the visions and warnings of seers and prophets, the songs of the poets, the novels of the novelists, the moderation of the multitude, as well as the laws passed in the legislature, all played their part. If the result falls pitiably short of what could be desired, there has been at any rate an advance. The horrors of the earlier period of the industrial revolution are no longer

possible; yet it is melancholy to reflect that Elliott's full programme has been carried out, and there still remains so much of the evil he denounced. The Corn Laws were repealed; England passed under the sway of capital, which ought, according to Elliott, to rule the world; all the blessings of *laissez faire* were experienced. And Marx and Lassalle arise to denounce capital as bitterly as ever Elliott denounced landlordism.

In his discipleship to Thomson Elliott belonged to the past; in respect of his social interests he was a pioneer, for these interests are a special feature of literature in the years after the close of Elliott's life. On this point there is just a slight contact between him and a widely different writer, Thomas Hood (1799–1845), the most richly endowed of all the poets intermediate between Shelley and Keats on the one hand, and Tennyson and Browning on the other.

As a youth Hood was apprenticed to an engraver; but the confinement necessitated by the occupation told on a delicate constitution, and, as change was necessary, his taste led him to become at twenty-one sub-editor of the *London Magazine*. His *Lycus the Centaur* was published in 1822, and, working in conjunction with John Hamilton Reynolds, he issued *Odes and Addresses to Great People* in 1825. This was followed by *Whims and Oddities* (1826–1827). In 1827 there appeared also the *Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*, a piece regarded by the author himself with special affection. A year afterwards *The Dream of Eugene Aram* was printed in an annual, *The Gem*, of which Hood himself was then editor. To 1830 belongs the first of Hood's *Comic Annuals*. In 1834 he published his only novel, *Tylney Hall*. Soon afterwards one of his greatest misfortunes befell him,—a heavy pecuniary loss through the failure of a firm in which he was interested. He went abroad, hoping to live economically and to work off the debt; but the passage across to Holland, though short, was extremely trying, and Hood's health was permanently injured. The rest of his life was a struggle against poverty and disease. On the death of Theodore Hook in 1841 he became editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*. In 1843 *The Song of the Shirt* was published in the Christmas number of

Punch. *Hood's Magazine* was started in 1844, and his own poem, *The Haunted House*, came out in the first number. In the same year a pension of £100, offered by Sir Robert Peel in a manner which made it alike honourable to the giver and to the receiver, relieved him; but he only lived to enjoy it for a year. "*The Bridge of Sighs* was his Corunna," says Thackeray, "his heights of Abraham—sick, weak, wounded, he fell in the full blaze of that great victory[1]."

Much of Hood's verse is of the humorous sort. The comic vein was native in him: he was perpetually playing practical jokes in his own home,—persuading his wife, for example, that the red or orange spots on the plaice were the signs of advanced decomposition, and that fish so marked were dangerous for food. But he was no mere jester, and when he seemed to become so he was acting not from choice but of necessity. He found that puns paid better than poetry, and in order to win bread for his wife and children, in a manly spirit, without complaint, he provided the public that for which it was willing to pay. We may regret that so much of Hood's genius was devoted to such work, but we cannot blame him.

The longest of Hood's poems, *Miss Kilmansegg*, one of his contributions to the *New Monthly Magazine*, stands quite alone. For originality of conception and execution it is unsurpassed in English. Though it belongs to the humorous class of poems, it was written in no mere jesting spirit. A profound sense of the besetting evils of Hood's age and country inspires it throughout. Under the grotesqueness of the conception there shine satire and criticism of life, the satire mingled with pity of a man not bitter but sad, of one whose sweetness of temper had been in no way spoilt by the struggle through which he had passed and was passing. The fertility and resource with which Hood keeps up the play upon gold are marvellous: the metal glitters in every line of the poem; but the satirist has read St Paul more accurately than many preachers: it is not money, but the *love of* money, that is the root of all evil. Money itself, Hood teaches,

[1] *Roundabout Papers*.

like the man of sense he was, may be as potent for good as for evil:—

"Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!
Good or bad a thousand fold!
How widely its agencies vary—
To save—to ruin—to curse—to bless—
As even its minted coins express,
Now stamped with the image of Good Queen Bess,
And now of a Bloody Mary."

Miss Kilmansegg clearly belongs in spirit rather to Hood's later than to his earlier period, more to the serious than to the purely comic poems. The comic element runs all through; it was as we have seen natural to Hood and came out in his private life. But still we must distinguish. In his earlier years, before he was quite so hard pressed for the means of living as he afterwards came to be, Hood showed a disposition to take himself seriously. Then came an intermediate period, during which necessity drove him to play the jester almost exclusively. Finally, in the last four or five years of his life he emerged from this state, and to these years belongs a great proportion of his most memorable pieces.

The serious poems of Hood's earlier years are far less earnest and less original than those of the closing period. *Lycus the Centaur*, a poem founded on the myth of Circe, is the work of a young man of poetic sensibility, responsive to the influences around him. Perhaps the traces of Keats which it shows are due to the influence of Hood's friend and future brother-in-law Reynolds, himself a poet. The *Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*, a gracefully fanciful poem, is in its way admirable. It is more original than *Lycus*, and far more masterly in metre. But it is not yet representative of the true Hood, whom the *Ode to Rae Wilson* discloses as neither a jester nor a denizen of fairyland, but a man deeply impressed with the realities of life. He was gradually discovering himself; and in the weird *Eugene Aram's Dream*, a poem ineffaceable from the memory, one phase of his genius found its perfect expression. *Ruth* likewise, one of his most beautiful poems, belongs to this earlier period. But with these exceptions, the pieces by which Hood is likely to be remembered as a serious poet are the work of his closing years. Passing over two or three

exquisite lyrics, there are, besides *Miss Kilmansegg*, three to be specially noted,—*The Bridge of Sighs*, *The Song of the Shirt*, and *The Haunted House*. These are the voice of the Hood we love to remember. He was well aware that the two pieces first named were of all his writings most likely to keep his memory green; and he directed that the words, "He sang the Song of the Shirt," should be engraved on his tombstone.

In industry there is a terrible gamut or scale of comparison, which allots always the greater misery to the more helpless. We have had the positive already in Ebenezer Elliott. Hood's championship of the suffering seamstress gives the comparative. The superlative finds utterance in Mrs Browning's exceeding bitter *Cry of the Children*. Never was there despair more poignantly expressed than in the lines:—

> "They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
> They sink in man's despair without its calm."

These poems are among the signs of advancing democracy; and there are many others. This inspires the prose of Carlyle and of Frederick Maurice. The novels of Dickens and of Charles Kingsley are full of it. The New Lanark of Robert Owen was its practical outcome in industry. In politics it was the motive of the work of Lord Shaftesbury. It started the memorable commission on the working of the poor law; it initiated our factory legislation; it swept away horrors so great that we have already almost forgotten that they could ever be.

It was a manly instinct which guided Hood in his choice of theme, and the fact that his social poems were practically useful is one more point to his honour. But we have to consider them here chiefly from the point of view of art. In metre and rhythm they are masterly; for in *technique* Hood went on improving to the end of his life. In tone too they are exactly right. Full of sentiment, as the subject demands that they should be, they are yet never sentimental. *The Bridge of Sighs*, with its charitable and pitiful humanity, is perhaps rather the finer of the two; but *The Song of the Shirt* is also one of the best poems that have ever been devoted to the alleviation of the lot of the weak, and it

remains one of the greenest leaves in the honourable chaplet of Mr Punch, whose voice on great national occasions and for great national causes has more than once or twice rung the truest of all.

The Haunted House is a poem of a widely different class, yet it too is among the very best of Hood's productions, and if it stood alone would be sufficient evidence of a highly poetical mind. It is poetry of the sort which only masters can create. In some respects it is suggestive of *Eugene Aram's Dream*: both manifest the same sway over the feelings of awe and terror. But the *Dream* narrates facts, while the *Haunted House* merely produces impressions; and if he who produces impressions be an impressionist, then in this piece Hood is among the greatest of the class. But he does his work by strokes perfectly definite and precise. The object is to create a sense of the supernatural:—

> "O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear;
> A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
> And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
> The place is Haunted!"

It is done by a careful selection of the objects the explorer—or the dreamer—sees, and of those he would expect to see in a human home, but does not see in the Haunted House,—"a dwelling-place,—and yet no habitation":—

> "Unhinged the iron gates half open hung,
> Jarr'd by the gusty gales of many winters,
> That from its crumbled pedestal had flung
> One marble globe in splinters.
>
> No dog was at the threshold, great or small;
> No pigeon on the roof—no household creature—
> No cat demurely dozing on the wall—
> Not one domestic feature.
>
> No human figure stirred, to go or come,
> No face looked forth from shut or open casement;
> No chimney smoked—there was no sign of Home
> From parapet to basement.
>
> With shatter'd panes the grassy court was starr'd;
> The time-worn coping-stone had tumbled after!
> And through the ragged roof the sky shone, barr'd
> With naked beam and rafter."

This fine piece makes no such appeal to popular feeling as the other two, or as *Eugene Aram* with its intelligible story. But it may be doubted whether Hood has ever written better poetry. It invites comparison with Browning's baffling, yet pictorially definite, *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*, or with Lord de Tabley's weird *Knight in the Wood*. Compare this stanza from the former poem:—

> "As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
> In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
> Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood
> One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
> Stood stupefied, however he came there:
> Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!"

Hood is a poet who just falls short of greatness. With better fortune, better health and longer life, one is tempted to say, he would have achieved it. And yet it is possible that the "veined humanity" of his later pieces is in some degree due to the battles he fought and the sufferings he endured. We have seen that he worked his way from the older style to the newer, from the fading influence of the classical school to the glow of the most burning and the most modern of questions. He is therefore a natural medium of transition from the school of the past to that of the present; from those who sought their models among the Elizabethans or in the eighteenth century, to those whose first care was to express, whether in the tones of Keats or of Shelley or of Wordsworth, the poets then most influential, some need or aspiration, thought or longing, of their own life and time.

In substance Hood's work belonged rather to the age which was to come than to that which had just ended; and in this respect he contrasts with a notable contemporary, Hartley Coleridge (1796–1849), whose very name is a link with earlier days, although the dates of his publications associate him with the years under review. Working under the shadow of the genius of his father and of Wordsworth, Hartley Coleridge seemed to rest satisfied with the ideals of the recent past, the chief differences between his work and that of his models being apparently due to temperament. Though he admired the Elizabethans, he was scarcely

touched by the Elizabethan revival. He had a strange mixture of good and bad fortune in his birth and early surroundings. The son of one of the most highly gifted of English poets, he inherited both his father's genius and his father's fatal defect of character. He breathed an atmosphere of poetry from his infancy. While he was still a child Wordsworth's beautiful lines inscribed to him, and the lines of his father, scarcely less beautiful, in *Frost at Midnight*, had ensured him a place in literature. Unfortunately, his father's lines are not merely a lovely fancy, they are also a theory of education for the boy, and whether from belief in it or from remissness the theory was actually carried into practice. After reference to his own early life, spent in the great city, Coleridge goes on,

> "But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
> By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
> Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
> Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
> And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
> The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
> Of that eternal language, which thy God
> Utters, who from eternity doth teach
> Himself in all, and all things in himself."

Such a system, if system it can be called, was probably the worst that could be conceived for a creature like Hartley Coleridge. From his earliest infancy he was imaginative to excess. At the age of five he had already the metaphysician's doubt as to the reality of matter. Asked a question about his being called Hartley, "'Which Hartley?' asked the boy. 'Why, is there more than one Hartley?' 'Yes,' he replied, 'there's a deal of Hartleys.' 'How so?' 'There's Picture-Hartley (Hazlitt had painted a portrait of him) and Shadow-Hartley, and there's Echo-Hartley, and there's Catch-me-fast Hartley,' at the same time seizing his own arm very eagerly."

The desultory education of Hartley Coleridge left his will undisciplined and his fancy unrestrained; and the sad story of his later years is but the natural sequel to a childhood and youth unwisely guided. He won a fellowship at Oriel College, Oxford, but at the end of his year of probation forfeited it for intemperance.

His after-life was principally spent wandering irresponsibly in the Lake district. There his name is associated with the cottage called the Nab, in which he died in 1849. It had previously been inhabited by Thomas De Quincey, and it was within easy reach of Wordsworth's home at Rydal Mount.

Hartley Coleridge, "a sun-faced little man," as Tennyson called him[1], won the hearts of the country people by his genial friendliness. They thought him a greater poet than Wordsworth, and with a fine indifference to dates they ascribed to the help of "lil' Hartley o' the Nab" the best work of the latter. In reality his besetting weaknesses prevented him from producing anything, except sonnets, worthy of his real powers. About 1820 he wrote a dramatic fragment, *Prometheus*, of high promise. He contributed in prose and in verse to the *London Magazine* and to *Blackwood*, showing among other qualities a power of delicate criticism. His *Worthies of Yorkshire and Lancashire* appeared under its first title of *Biographia Borealis* in 1832; and in 1833 came a volume of *Poems*. The rest of Hartley Coleridge's poetry was published posthumously in 1851, with an interesting biographical sketch by his brother Derwent.

Hartley Coleridge is at his best in the sonnets. A few of his lyrics are very good, but his touch is unsure. In longer compositions, like *Leonard and Susan*, he fails; and his "playful and humorous" pieces are contemptible. But the best of his sonnets will bear comparison with almost any in the English language. They are exquisitely musical, they show a keen sense of natural beauty, a fine human sympathy, and they are touching from the pathetic sense of failure they often suggest. Wordsworth proved that he fathomed Hartley Coleridge's character and foresaw his destiny; but no one knew him better than he knew himself, and no one has more wisely depicted his character. His own beautiful sonnet is as full of insight as of poetry:—

"Long time a child, and still a child, when years
Had painted manhood on my cheek, was I,—
For yet I lived like one not born to die;
A thriftless prodigal of smiles and tears,

[1] *Life of Tennyson*, i. 154.

No hope I needed, and I knew no fears.
But sleep, though sweet, is only sleep, and waking,
I waked to sleep no more, at once o'ertaking
The vanguard of my age, with all arrears
Of duty on my back. Nor child, nor man,
Nor youth, nor sage, I find my hair is grey,
For I have lost the race I never ran;
A rathe December blights my lagging May;
And still I am a child, though I be old,
Time is my debtor for my years untold."

An irresponsible being like Hartley Coleridge carries the reader far away from those political and social interests which may sometimes be associated with work poetically inferior. In *The Christian Year* the historical interest is felt once more, though in this case the sphere of interest is not politics, as it was in the *Corn-Law Rhymes*, but religious thought, and still more religious emotion.

Critics have sometimes remarked how strange it is that so little poetry of the first class, at least among Europeans either of ancient or of modern times, can be classified as "religious." Poetry seems, nay *is*, closely cognate to religion; yet *The Treasury of Sacred Song* is weak and poor and pale beside *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*. The ancient Hebrews possessed the secret of making their religion poetry and their poetry religion; but we have lost it, or rather we never had it. There is a religious element in *Paradise Lost*; but though the great epic attempts—perhaps partly *because* it attempts—to "justify the ways of God to man," it is not what we mean when we speak of a religious poem. As regards this general inferiority of purely religious verse, the nineteenth century was no exception to the rule. The volume of *Sacred, Moral and Religious Verse* is the most bulky in Mr Miles's valuable collection, *The Poets and the Poetry of the Century*; and it is also, not the dreariest, but the only dreary volume of the ten. How few are the grains of wheat and how plentiful the chaff in such collections as *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, which are supposed to be receptacles of the precious grain after the rubbish has been carefully eliminated! Probably the boards of selection have not been ideally qualified for their task; but they have

certainly had "glimmerings of sense," like Scott's "Dougal cratur." It may be granted that they might have done better; but the broad fact remains that the material does not exist which alone would have enabled them to do well.

In this depressing department of verse, where hardly anything is of first-rate quality and the great bulk is intolerably flat and tedious, there is in the present instance the exceptional interest of a great change, which was itself a reaction against an opposite change in the preceding century. In the seventeenth century there is the name of Milton on the Puritan side; but there is no compartment of English religious verse large enough to hold Milton; while all the group of three, Crashaw, Herbert and Vaughan, usually classified as religious poets, are catholic and mystical. Crashaw became by creed a Roman Catholic, and the other two unmistakably share the catholic spirit. In the eighteenth century, on the other hand, the great writers of devotional and religious verse were either dissenters by birth, like Isaac Watts, or were driven into dissent, like the Wesleys, or, like Cowper, were attached to that Calvinistic section of the Church which is regarded with a sorrowful and not always a very willing tolerance by the more catholic section. This strain of dissenting or Protestant-Anglican religious verse was carried on into the early part of the nineteenth century; for the season of "catholic" poetry was not yet. It was carried on feebly enough by Henry Kirke White; by the excellent but not very poetical Bishop Mant, who versified the miracles of the Gospels as well as the Psalms, and of whose hymns a few are still in use; and by James Grahame, author of *The Sabbath*. Another who deserves mention if it were only for the surprise of finding him in such company is John Bowring (1792–1872), who in 1854 was knighted for his diplomatic services. As poetry, Bowring's hymns are of little value; but the fact that the friend of Bentham's old age, and the first editor of the *Westminster Review*, wrote hymns is curious enough to be worth recording. It is true that his editorship gave little satisfaction to the more stalwart utilitarians, and that he felt impelled by religious scruples to exclude certain of Bentham's works from the collected edition. But though Bowring was no poet, and a puzzling and

possibly puzzled Benthamite, he was a great linguist and introduced to English readers specimens of Russian, Spanish, Polish, Servian, Magyar and Cheskian poetry.

The great representative, however, of Protestant religious poetry in the early part of the nineteenth century was James Montgomery (1771–1854), the Moravian, whose lines on home (from *The West Indies*) formerly were, and perhaps still are, a favourite selection for recitation among the middle classes—of society and of education. From the close of the eighteenth century to the eve of his own death Montgomery was an active and diligent writer. His volumes of verse and prose are numerous, and all tend to edification,—morally, but not so certainly in the literary sense. In his own day he was much overrated, and his great popularity was due less to merit than to the fact that he so exactly and accurately expressed in verse the spirit of English dissent; but it would be unjust to deny him a share, though a small one, of the poetic spirit. The best of his hymns, such as "Hail to the Lord's Anointed," and "For ever with the Lord," are good, and there are grains of gold, though rarely without alloy, among his miscellaneous pieces.

The year 1827 was a kind of *annus mirabilis* of religious verse. The fact that one of Montgomery's volumes, *The Christian Poet*, appeared then, is of little moment; for most years witnessed a volume by him. But in that year the hymns of Reginald Heber (1783–1826) were published posthumously, *The Course of Time* by Robert Pollok (1798–1827) appeared just a few months before the young author was laid in the grave, and *The Christian Year* by John Keble (1792–1866) started the Anglo-Catholic school of the nineteenth century.

Pollok is sometimes bracketed with Kirke White, chiefly because both died young, and both were of a religious turn of mind. But there seems to have been more true poetic stuff in Pollok than in his English predecessor. The plan of his poem—a review of human history from Adam downwards—is absurd, and much of the verse is fustian; but there are passages which show genuine, though immature and undisciplined, power. Had he lived he would have run risk of being ruined by the extraordinary popu-

larity of his first achievement, a popularity which made *The Course of Time* for many years one of the most saleable of books; but there are evidences of strength in Pollok which render it at least as probable that he would have "deposited his mud," and flowed on in a strong and clear stream of verse. It is to be feared, however, that the success of his only poem was due almost as much to defects as to merits. He did not soar too high above his audience; like Montgomery, he versified the religious sentiment of Presbyterian Scotland and Nonconformist England.

Of the three volumes of 1827, the *Hymns* of Heber may be regarded as a connecting link between the volume of the Presbyterian Pollok and that of the High Church Keble; for the great missionary bishop was almost as far removed from the one as from the other. Scott met him at Oxford in 1803; and, reading Heber's *Journal* in the sad evening of his life, was reminded of the time when his own laurels were beginning to bloom, and both were "madcaps," and Heber was "a gay young fellow, a wit and a satirist, and burning for literary fame." Heber's poetical career was just beginning. He read to Scott the MS. of his prize poem, *Palestine*; and it was on Scott's suggestion that the lines describing the silent rise of Solomon's Temple were added,—"No hammer fell, no ponderous axes rung," &c. The circumstances of Heber's life gave little scope for the "madcap" quality, the gaiety, wit and satire of his youth; but an occasional effusion shows the presence of the qualities detected by Scott. Though the literary promise he gave in those early years was never fully redeemed, Heber is one of the best of modern hymnologists, and in his happier efforts he contrives to put into his lines a rare majesty of sound.

So far, however, as religious verse is concerned, the future belonged neither to Montgomery, nor to Heber, nor to any of their kin, but to the school founded by Keble, who, whether he was or was not the real originator of the Oxford Movement, was certainly its corypheus in verse. We see his spirit rather than theirs in the verse of Newman, Isaac Williams, Neale, Faber, R. S. Hawker, Christina Rossetti and the younger Aubrey de Vere. To a certain extent they were all anticipated by Wordsworth, who, as inspiration waned, became more and more didactic, and

who in his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1821) versified many phases of religious life and history, doctrine and custom. This collection is, to the superficial, the chief of Wordsworth's contributions to religious verse; but in reality there is far less religion in it than in those earlier poems where he allows nature to speak through a reverent heart. Wordsworth himself felt his kinship with the Catholic party and was interested in their poetical work. Of *The Christian Year* he said, characteristically, "It is very good; so good, that, if it were mine, I would write it all over again."

The Christian Year still remains the most satisfactory expression in poetry of the spirit which inspired the Oxford Movement, and is the work by which Keble is most likely to be remembered, though there is higher poetry in the *Lyra Innocentium* (1846), and though the *Miscellaneous Poems*, posthumously published in 1869, give refreshing glimpses of the poet stripped of his ecclesiastical robes. It would be a critical extravagance to call Keble a great poet; but he is a true and a good one. He would have been better if he could have made himself, not less religious, but, in his poetry, less conscious of his religion. The plan of *The Christian Year* clogs and hampers the freedom of the poetic movement; yet, beyond doubt, it has given the poet a popularity he would not otherwise have enjoyed. A volume which carries the devout reader round and through all the Church fasts and festivals must, if it be competently done at all, be in request; and there is far more than competence in Keble's execution. Nevertheless, even to a devout mind, to follow such a plan must be at times something of a task. It has not the sustaining power of a great subject which has an inherent unity, and which by the force of that unity lifts the poet to the "highth" of his "great argument." As a laureate manufacturing odes on public occasions is prone to sink beneath himself; as a preacher preaching that which is appropriate to the season, rather than that which comes home to his own bosom, is apt to seem vapid to his hearers; so the poet of *The Christian Year* sinks not infrequently to the commonplace. Homer may nod; but the more frequently he nods—"the less Homer he." All are familiar with the Morning and Evening hymns; and such pieces are sufficient guarantee

that Keble's poetry at its best is worthy of high praise. Yet even at its best it often suffers from the religious purpose. Take, for example, the beautiful lines, "Red o'er the forest peers the setting sun." The first stanza is a perfect picture of a beautiful natural scene :—

> "Red o'er the forest peers the setting sun,
> The line of yellow light dies fast away
> That crowned the eastern copse : and chill and dun
> Falls on the moor the brief November day."

But the next stanza betrays the fact that the picture has not been painted from disinterested love of its beauty. We are called upon to

> "See the calm leaves float
> Each to his rest beneath their parent shade."

This naturally suggests the likeness to decaying life; and then the difference between the life of man and the life of plants is pointed out; they have in store "no second spring"; but "man's portion is to die and rise again." After this come the reflections which naturally occur to the pious mind. All this is unobjectionable. It is within any poet's right, and it may be one of his highest merits, to "moralise his song." But in order to be perfectly successful it must be done naturally, spontaneously, inevitably. Shakespeare's nature-pictures grow out of the situation. The flowers which add so much to the pathos of the mad Ophelia come there of themselves; the references of Duncan and Banquo to the site of Macbeth's castle, effective as they are from the contrast between the peace suggested by the "loved mansionry" of "the temple-haunting martlet," and the deed of blood which is to follow, are just the natural, unforced utterances of travellers; the scene between Florizel and Perdita is almost as beautiful in its absolute fitness and its perfect ease as in the imaginative treatment of the daffodils and the violets. When Burns disturbs the nest of the poor mouse, there is nothing forced in the transition of his thoughts from mice to men; once started upon such a train of reflection, it is to the imaginative mind inevitable. So too in the best of Wordsworth the fervour of imagination holds in perfect fusion the two elements of natural beauty and of human feeling.

So it is always with the greatest masters; but so it is not with Keble. After the making of the ring of virgin gold there remains necessary, Browning tells us, "just a spirt o' the proper fiery acid" to unfasten the alloy indispensable to the craftsman in the process of manufacture. It is this which Keble seems unable to supply. The elements of his verse lie side by side, mingled, but not fused. We see the nature-poet in one stanza, the religious poet in the next. He lacks the art to conceal art, or, better, the glow of feeling which effects the concealment unconsciously. A little coldness is the defect of his verse, just as it is the defect of a most amiable and virtuous life. We are tempted to speculate whether he might not, like the monster of fable, have gained strength by touching earth. But he belongs to that class of saintly characters who are innocent, rather than greatly virtuous by conquest over evil; he is of Rephan rather than of earth.

The progress in poetry of the movement of which Keble's work was an anticipation must be traced later. That movement has been referred to in the introduction as a reaction; and in matters intellectual it is correctly so called. Essentially an attempt to substitute authority for reason, it could not but be reactionary in the sphere of intellect, where no divided empire is possible. But it was far from being wholly reactionary in the domain of poetry and art; on the contrary, it did much to breathe new life into them. It was, as we shall find, closely related to the great pre-Raphaelite movement alike in art and in literature; it just touched Browning and Tennyson; and it furnishes the key to much of the work of Clough and Arnold, as well as to some of that of Ruskin.

The remaining poets of the interregnum, though they show the widest differences, are all bound together by a common interest in the drama. Some, like Milman, carried on the Byronic tradition. A little later the new Elizabethan school rose into prominence; and to it belong Beddoes, Wells, Wade and Darley,—some of whom, in their work for the drama, seem to have done almost as much violence to their genius as did Lord Brooke in the Elizabethan age itself. Taylor, and after him Talfourd, may be called dramatists of the study; while Sheridan Knowles and

Planché owe their position in the history of the drama not to poetic gift but to stagecraft.

The misfortune of the time, in regard to the drama, is that the qualities requisite for success in dramatic art are not found united in any single individual. One has plenty of poetry, another, abundance of technical skill, a third, a gift of very serviceable rhetoric; but no one has all that is required. And so, there is no drama of the time, which, as at once a poetic work and a piece to be presented on the stage, is fit to compare, not with the masterpieces of Shakespeare, but with the best of Byron or of Shelley. Beddoes rivalled them on the poetic side, and Sheridan Knowles surpassed them in technique; but it would have required a union of the two to produce a great dramatist.

James Sheridan Knowles (1784–1862) had the will and purpose to revive the poetical drama, and he lacked only one thing needful to carry out the design. He had stagecraft; for, deserting the medical profession for which he was trained, he appeared in 1809 as an actor. He was an adept at the construction of plots, and few have been better able to sustain the interest and to conceal the issue until it is ripe for disclosure. The one thing needful which he did not possess was, unfortunately, just a flash of the divine fire. His other gifts are rendered nugatory by the mediocrity of his imagination. His poverty may be detected, not exclusively but most easily, in the stiff metre and ordinary conceptions of the lyrics scattered through the dramas. Knowles is a bondman of the commonplace, content to trudge along the earth when he ought to be soaring into the empyrean. The mirror which the dramatist holds up to nature is of the magic sort, which either, as in the case of Shakespeare, reflects an infinity more than is visible to ordinary humanity, or just so much as the average man realises; and that is incomparably less than the whole of nature. Moreover, in order to make the poetical drama, to the naturalism which Hamlet enjoins upon the players there must be added the supernaturalism hinted at in Wordsworth's "light that never was on sea or land." And of this Knowles has no conception.

The career of Knowles as a dramatist began in 1810, his

Caius Gracchus was acted in 1815, and his *Virginius*, which won him fame, in 1820. From that time onwards until 1843 he produced a large number of plays of the most varied kinds,—historical and domestic, tragic and comic. In the latter part of his life an exaggerated evangelicalism turned him from the drama. Knowles was a man of little scholarship and of narrow reading. He was almost entirely uninfluenced by the Elizabethan revival, in the midst of which he lived; and though superficial resemblances to Shakespeare may be detected in his works, he is not in any real sense Shakespearean. We are told that from the time when he started authorship he purposely refrained from reading in order that he might not be led into plagiarism. But ignorance never was the parent of originality; and the result of this singular precaution was, not so much to eliminate reminiscences of his predecessors, as to impoverish his ideas. In no case could he have risen to high literary rank; but if he had read more he would probably have attained a somewhat wider reach of mind.

The high reputation of Knowles as a writer of tragedy has long passed away; and whoever reads his works at the present day will marvel how it was ever won. There is doubtless vigour and power in *Virginius*; but *Caius Gracchus* is poor, and the other historical dramas, *William Tell* (1825) and *Alfred the Great* (1831) are not much better. The lack of the poetic element is a fatal defect in tragedy; and it was a happy change when, in the middle of his career, Knowles turned to comedy. His first attempt in that line was *The Beggar's Daughter of Bethnal Green* (1828), his most successful, *The Hunchback* (1832). *The Love Chase* (1837) and *Old Maids* (1841) are also favourable examples of the comedy of Knowles. He was a follower of the eighteenth century school, and in comedy his practical knowledge was of great value.

The amiable and good James Robinson Planché (1796–1880) scarcely deserves more than a passing notice, for his pleasant extravaganzas and burlesques have not the "body" necessary to secure permanence in literature; and his more ambitious design to naturalise on the English stage a comedy of the type of Aristophanes was wholly unsuccessful. His archæological studies

led, however, to one reform on the stage. On the revival of *King John* in 1823, Planché designed the costumes in accordance with the fashion of the age in which the scene of the play was laid; and it was largely due to him that the gross anachronisms which had hitherto prevailed were gradually swept away.

Among the more literary writers of drama, the first place chronologically, and for a time in reputation, belongs to Henry Hart Milman (1791–1868) who, though far greater as a historian, first made his name as a writer of verse. Milman possessed more of the poetic spirit than he is now credited with. He is among the best of our hymn-writers; and his prize poem, the *Apollo Belvidere* (1812) is the very best prize poem ever written. If the style is rhetorical, the rhetoric is of the best sort. The secret of Milman's loss of popularity is not want of poetry, but rather deficiency of dramatic power. There are splendid passages in most of his plays; yet the plays cannot be described as splendid wholes, for the author fails to impart action. Milman's dramatic career began with *Fazio* (1815), which was brilliantly successful, and culminated with *The Fall of Jerusalem* (1820), a "Sacred Tragedy," which the author described to the publisher as neither intended for nor capable of being adapted to public representation[1]. Milman gradually lost reputation in his later dramas, *The Martyr of Antioch* (1821), *Belshazzar* (1822) and *Anne Boleyn* (1826). At the zenith of his success he seems to have over-estimated his own work, and narrowly escaped being the first author who ever left John Murray on account of money[2].

Sir Aubrey de Vere (1788–1846) was slightly senior to Milman, but he was considerably less precocious. A contemporary of Byron at Harrow, it is remarkable that he completely escaped the dominant influence of his early manhood. He was rather a follower of Wordsworth, who held a very high opinion of De Vere's sonnets. His first drama was *Julian the Apostate* (1822). *The Duke of Mercia* (1823) followed; and then De Vere almost ceased to write till near the close of his life. Though by reason of the works already named he is a poet of the interregnum, his

[1] *Memoirs of John Murray*, ii. 102.
[2] *ibid.* 106.

place in literature depends mainly upon *Mary Tudor*, which was written in the last year of his life and published posthumously. This powerful and moving tragedy (which was meant to be part of a trilogy, to be entitled *The Daughters of Tudor*) is not altogether unworthy of the emphatic praise of Gladstone, who ranked *Mary Tudor* next to Shakespeare[1]. The conception of the Queen's character is admirable. De Vere delineates Mary as a character by nature at once strong and good, but gradually warped by the influence of the deepest and in themselves the finest feelings of humanity,—love for her husband, combined with the womanly yearning to win the love which he did not give her in return; and reverence for religion, degenerating in her case under evil guidance to superstition and cruelty. Nor is Mary's the only well-drawn character of the play. Pole stands out clear and strong; and so does Gardiner, a churchman of a very different type. This distinct and sometimes subtle characterisation, along with the excellence of the plot, gives De Vere's work a high place among the few poetical dramas of the period; and the vividness of the metaphors and similes renders its place the more sure. A curious circumstance in literary history is that Tennyson entered into a sort of competition, doubtless unintentional, with the dramatic work of the De Veres, father and son. His *Queen Mary* treats again, less successfully, the subject which Sir Aubrey may fairly be said to have made his own in *Mary Tudor*; and his *Becket* traverses once more the ground of the younger De Vere's *Saint Thomas of Canterbury*, which had only been published a few years before.

Mary Russell Mitford would deserve a word in this connexion were it only for the excellence of her descriptive prose. She took herself very seriously as a dramatist, and, perversely enough, valued herself in that capacity more highly than as the writer of the exquisite sketches in *Our Village*. From *Julian* (1823) on through the *Foscari* (1826) to the culminating point in *Rienzi* (1828), she was conceived to rank among the first of English tragedians. The flavour is however evaporated from her dramas.

[1] A. de Vere's *Recollections*, 215.

The gentle, shrewd, humorous power of observation, which *Our Village* shows to be her true gift, was not that which could supply the materials for tragedy; and, beautiful as is her prose style, she had not the gift of verse.

So too Bryan Waller Procter (1787–1874), better known by his *nom de plume* of Barry Cornwall, in his earlier days aspired to fame in the drama, and, though he is now remembered solely as the writer of *English Songs* (1832), his tragedy of *Mirandola* was in 1821 performed with great success at Covent Garden. Procter, however, is already no more than a name in literature. Nothing he has done is really noteworthy, and his name survives rather for its associations with greater names than for his own sake. The author of "The Sea, the Sea, the open Sea!" might be forgotten, for it is only spirited verse; but the schoolfellow of Byron, the steady friend of the hapless Beddoes and the early admirer of Browning will be remembered for their sake.

But by far the most interesting figure among the group of dramatists of the closet was Henry (afterwards Sir Henry) Taylor (1800–1886), who by reason of his *Isaac Comnenus* (1827) belongs to the interregnum, though his greatest and most memorable production was published after the appearance of Tennyson and Browning. Taylor is interesting not only, perhaps not even chiefly, for the value of his writings, but also because he is the representative of a tendency, and because he made a deliberate and conscious effort to do what many were vaguely striving to do without being aware of their own purpose. The age was gradually emancipating itself from Byron. One way of emancipation lay along the path traversed by Shelley and Keats; and this was taken by Beddoes and those akin to him. The other was by the cultivation of a spirit of thoughtfulness, restraint and lucidity; and this was chosen by Taylor. The great leaders of the period afterwards steered an intermediate course, with a leaning towards the romantic side rather than the classical.

Taylor's theory and purpose were proclaimed in the introduction to *Philip van Artevelde* (1834). His theory was that the poetry which was popular in his own day was a weakened Byronism, sensational in its character rather than intellectual.

Further, with an interesting anticipation of the judgment of Matthew Arnold, Taylor pronounced Shelley to be wanting in reality, and declared that the mind was no more enriched by reading his verse than by gazing on "gorgeously-coloured clouds in an evening sky[1]." Current poetry, then, in Taylor's opinion, had passion and fervour and colouring: what it lacked was the intellectual and immortal part of poetry, its philosophy.

Taylor contrasts with his contemporaries in character and circumstances, as well as in dramatic theory. He entered the Colonial Office in 1824, lived an easy life of official routine, gradually rose in the service, was knighted in 1869, and retired in 1872 on a comfortable pension, to die at last full of years and honours. He began his literary career as a contributor to the *Quarterly Review*, then edited by Gifford, and adopted at first, but afterwards regretted and abandoned, that tone of sarcastic superiority which in those days was customary with anonymous critics. His *Isaac Comnenus* won the praise of Southey, but failed to achieve popularity; and the loss involved in the publication of it led Murray to decline *Philip van Artevelde* when it was offered to him a few years later. Though the latter is separated from its predecessor by seven years in date of publication, it was begun almost immediately after *Isaac Comnenus* appeared. It was hammered out and laboured at and polished in the leisure hours of six years. This deliberateness of composition was natural to Taylor, and was enforced by his theory of the function of verse. *The Virgin Widow* (1849), one of his latest compositions, was on hand for four years. *Philip van Artevelde* won immediate success, and made Taylor a lion of society. The triumph was all the more surprising because it followed upon the conscious and deliberate defiance of popular taste, which is proclaimed in the preface. From the vantage-ground of seventy years we can see clearly enough that success came because the time was ripe, and because the popular taste was waiting for new men, new methods

[1] Some nine years later we shall find Ruskin teaching in *Modern Painters* that there are few things which will more enrich the mind than just this cloud-gazing.

and new ideals. For the moment, it seemed as if Taylor was to be the man, and his the methods.

A prose volume, *The Statesman* (1836), helped to check Taylor's popularity, and brought upon him, through the sarcasm of certain passages, the hostility of those who felt the possible application to themselves. *Edwin the Fair* followed in 1842, and then, thirteen years after *The Virgin Widow*, came the last of his dramatic compositions, *St Clement's Eve* (1862).

Taylor never equalled *Philip van Artevelde*. *Isaac Comnenus* was immature. *Edwin the Fair* was similar to *Philip*, but less striking and less strong; and both the romantic comedy of *The Virgin Widow* and the much better as well as more popular *St Clement's Eve* were of slighter materials. Taylor was a man of great talent; but his dramatic scheme demanded superlative ability. His solitary success exhausted him, and there remained no more for him to do but to repeat himself. By an intellectual *tour de force* he built up an admirable play; but he had not the material wherewith to construct a second. And it was a case of conscious construction. The element which is underrated, if not forgotten, in his theory of poetry, is that which, for want of a better name, is called "inspiration." He left no room for "the inevitable" in plot and characterisation. His men and women are not like paintings, where the colours melt into one another; they are rather mosaics, laboriously pieced together; and though the work is skilfully done, the seams are visible. Neither had Taylor the instinct for action; frequently the piece stands still while the characters brood and moralise and reflect.

It may be well to do some little violence to chronology in order to notice with Taylor two or three other dramatists who belong more completely than he to the later period. One of them, Thomas Noon Talfourd (1795–1854), has, on more than one ground besides his own work, a claim upon the gratitude of lovers of literature. He was among the early champions of Wordsworth, and he was the friend and literary executor of Charles Lamb, whose letters and memorials he edited with care and taste. Talfourd's work at the bar left him only the odd moments of a busy life to devote to literature. Hence, although

the drama had been with him a passion from early years, it was not till 1836 that his first tragedy, *Ion*, was performed. Its success stimulated him so that *The Athenian Captive* followed in 1838, and *Glencoe* in 1840.

The subject of *Ion*, Talfourd's best-known work, is classical; but in form the drama shows the influence of the classics as filtered through France and modified also by the higher traditions of the English stage. Macready detected in it the qualities necessary for success, and the event proved him to be right. Nevertheless, an ordinary reader would be tempted to say that the play was one which would appeal to the student rather than to a popular audience. Talfourd is a sort of Henry Taylor considerably weakened. His work is essentially psychological. The whole play is constructed for the sake of Ion, in whom we see the representation of an innocent but noble-minded inexperience awakening to heroism through contact with the tragical facts of life. *The Athenian Captive* is another classical theme handled in much the same spirit and exhibiting similar merits; and the similarity is preserved still in *Glencoe: or, The Fate of the Macdonalds*, in spite of the fact that it deals with the modern world instead of the ancient, and with the north instead of the south. In all these plays the scheme is ambitious. Talfourd's purpose, avowed in the somewhat wordy and self-conscious prefaces, was to re-create a poetical drama. But for this he was inadequately endowed. He was a man of poetical mind rather than a poet. His statuesque characters are almost invariably frigid in their speech. Under the influence of Wordsworth descriptions of nature are sometimes dragged in without much regard to poetic fitness; and there is in all the plays rather too little action, combined with a superfluity of sentiment. The style is redundant and overloaded with ornament. Nowhere is there the least touch of comedy or of humour.

Between Talfourd and Bulwer Lytton there is a point of connexion in the fact that the second and most successful play of the latter, *The Lady of Lyons*, was dedicated to Talfourd. Lytton fills a larger space in the department of fiction than in that of verse, whether dramatic or other; but nevertheless the

man who wrote two of the very few plays which have kept the stage from their appearance till the present day, and which enjoy a steady popularity that has not been equalled since the comedies of Sheridan, is clearly a person deserving of some attention and study.

In the beginning of his career Lytton was decidedly Byronic; and, though he repudiated the connexion, there is throughout more of the Byronic spirit than of any other in his works. It is certainly so in the case of the dramas. When Henry Taylor was declaring, with much truth, that the day of Byron was past, Lytton with his sure instinct was discovering just how far Byronism was antiquated, and how far it could still be made popular. He found the solution in the dramas. In the period of his early novels Lytton was too close a follower of Byron for the taste of the rising generation: he was speaking to the generation which was passing away. The dramas are an intermediate stage, still Byronic, but with a Byronism written up to the new taste.

Lytton's first play, *The Duchess de la Vallière* (1836) was, notwithstanding the help of Macready in the cast of actors, one of his few failures. On the other hand, *The Lady of Lyons* (1838), written in a fortnight for Macready, and represented on the stage by him in the part of Claude Melnotte, won a dazzling success. *Richelieu* (1838) was almost equally popular; and both these plays have ever since remained favourites on the stage. *The Sea Captain* (1839) was not so well liked; but even that was good enough in respect of stage effect to be revived thirty years later at the Lyceum. *Money* (1840), a prose comedy, and *Not so Bad as we Seem* (1851), another, complete the tale of Lytton's dramatic compositions.

Few lovers of poetry and of the poetical drama will rank any of Lytton's plays very high. There is nothing in them that rivals in poetic quality the best of Beddoes, nothing comparable in force to the most powerful scenes of Wells, nothing equal to the best character-studies of Henry Taylor, nothing so profound as *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, nothing even approaching the passion of *Ottima and Sebald*. All Lytton's plays are melodramatic. When he strives for stage effect he becomes theatrical, and there is tinsel in nearly

everything that he writes. The plot of *The Lady of Lyons* trembles on the verge of absurdity, the hero is about the poorest creature who was ever elevated to such a position. In *Richelieu*, the great statesman is a shadow. And yet in spite of all this, there is in these dramas the incommunicable something which makes them act and go. Better poets compose far richer dramas, which fail; but Lytton somehow hits the nail at which he aims, and drives it home.

It is strange that in the lyric the false taste and false sentiment of Lytton are less felt than in the other forms of his work, although the ear is more sensitive to such faults in lyrical poetry than in anything else. Expecting glare in the theatre, men pardon some measure of it in dramatic work; and fiction is not usually judged by very rigid canons of art. But the lyric is emotion seven times refined, and unless all dross is burnt and purged away it stands condemned. Lytton's lyrics do not always bear the test. They are often hard and sometimes false; but on the whole there is in them far less of the meretricious than we should expect. There are many echoes and imitations, conscious and unconscious, echoes of most of the great contemporary and recent poets, of Byron, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, and many more. There is also a good deal of rhetoric. But when all deductions have been made, in such pieces as *The First Violets*, *Is it all Vanity?* *The Love of Maturer Years* and *Absent yet Present* there is sufficient evidence that Lytton had in considerable measure the lyrical gift.

There is a great gulf between Taylor and the group of which Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803–1849) was the brightest ornament. The two contrast at every point. While Taylor was somewhat deficient in imagination, Beddoes was "of imagination all compact." Taylor constructed everything by line and rule: Beddoes took a perverse pleasure in defying, not merely literary conventions, but often the vital laws of art. Taylor was too conscious and deliberate: of all writers of the nineteenth century, Beddoes is the man whose best pieces most impress us as having "written themselves." Taylor was classical, Beddoes ultra-romantic; but although Taylor was successful and honoured, while Beddoes died by his own hand, and his extraordinary masterpiece was

not printed till he was in his grave, it was nevertheless Beddoes who was in the main stream, while Taylor was in only a side current.

Numerous attempts have been made, with very limited success, to define that romanticism which so powerfully moved the mind of Europe in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and which has been the life and soul of the literature of the nineteenth. Heine described it as the re-awakening of the spirit of the Middle Ages; and one of the latest writers on the subject finds nothing better he can do than to adopt this as "a rough working definition." But such a definition explains nothing. In truth, it is no definition at all, being really equivalent to the assertion that romanticism prevailed also in the Middle Ages, and so reducible to the tautologous proposition, "romanticism is romanticism." A phrase such as Heine's, however, though worthless as a definition, may be useful enough when the purpose is, like that of Mr Beers in the passage referred to, to enquire what works manifest the romantic spirit. It fulfils the function of what is called the "characteristic" in the classifications of botanists. But being purely artificial it has also the limitations of the characteristic, and tells us nothing of the spirit or inner meaning of romanticism, any more than the symptomatic hectic cough tells the nature of phthisis. We come nearer to the essence in Mr Theodore Watts-Dunton's phrase, "the renascence of wonder"; in fact we have here probably as much of the essence as a single phrase will carry. We can see the operation of wonder in all the manifestations of the romantic spirit. It explains the spectres and goblins and enchantments of poetry and fiction. It explains the rising admiration of Gothic in opposition to classical architecture,—the one with its vaguely grand vistas and its endless variety; the other a harmony created from a few simple principles. It explains the cloudy visions of Turner in contrast with the realism of the Dutch school, and the tense emotion of the figures drawn by the Pre-Raphaelites in contrast with the calm of a Greek statue. It explains the reversion to the Catholic mythology with its appeal to the feelings, in contrast with the Protestant appeal to the judgment.

The subtler manifestations of the romantic spirit might be illustrated indefinitely by quotations from Coleridge and Shelley and Keats side by side with quotations from Dryden and Pope. In the former company we find ourselves in a world of faery casements, of mysterious, untraversed, silent seas, of clouds piloted over earth and ocean by the lightning. And when we turn from the treatment of nature to the treatment of moral problems, we find a similar spirit prevalent among the romantic poets. Such problems are either wrapped in a haze of mystery, or their proportions are so gigantic that the human mind can hardly grapple with them. Prometheus on his crag, Hyperion flaring on "from stately nave to nave, from vault to vault," are figures not to be measured with a foot-rule. They carry the mind back, not to the immediate predecessors of their creators, but to Milton and to Michael Angelo. Christabel in the midnight wood—the Ancient Mariner on the shrinking deck—the subtle suggestions of sin, the incalculable consequences of a deed of cruelty or of love—such are the problems which the poets of the Romantic Revival love, not to treat, but to suggest, and then leave to bear their fruit in the mind. Such work stands in the strongest possible contrast to the philosophy of the *Essay on Man* or the hard outlines of the character of Achitophel. The earlier poets present us with a series of syllogisms, the later ones create an atmosphere.

Although they are in eternal warfare, the two schools are the necessary complement one of the other. Eighteenth century classicism had to give place to romanticism, because the former had cut itself away from "the root of the matter." "Our indispensable eighteenth century" had to be rediscovered, because without it romanticism was in danger of wandering aimlessly in a fog. The two spirits are never completely separated, because they are not really two, but only different aspects of one spirit. Perfection means perfect equipoise and due proportion between them; imperfection is the loss of balance and proportion. Taylor inclined to the one side, and was barren; Beddoes inclined to the other, and was ineffective. The latter, with far higher gifts, could make nothing round and whole; the former has nothing comparable to the inspired snatches of Beddoes.

The first to appreciate the greatness of Beddoes's gift for poetry was George Darley (1795–1846), himself a poet, who in the *London Magazine* sang the praise of *The Bride's Tragedy* in terms rendered all the more striking by the author's unsparing censure of some men of much greater fame than Beddoes. Darley, an Irishman, was one of the leaders of that Celtic revival to which we owe a great body of recent verse; and though he early left his native island, he never ceased to look back with fond affection to the country of his birth. His life was unfortunate. A shy and sensitive man afflicted with a distressing stammer, he cut himself off almost completely from society. He had the ambition of a poet, but he never could be sure of the adequacy of his own gift, and little encouragement came to him from without. There is deep pathos in his statement to Miss Mitford, who had written in "kindly praise" of *Nepenthe* (1835), that for seven long years he had lived "on a charitable saying of Coleridge's, that he sometimes liked to take up *Sylvia*" (1827). The latter work, a fairy pastoral, part prose, part lyrical verse, was aptly described by Miss Mitford as "something between *The Faithful Shepherdess* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." But Darley's connexions are rather with the Cavaliers than with the Elizabethans; and his well-known piece, "It is not beauty I demand," was the best of all imitations of the Cavalier style until Miss K. Mann, in *Old Songs of the Elizabethans with new Songs in Reply*, caught the tone again and again.

It is the lyrical snatches which give charm to *Sylvia*, a lyrical drama which shows little power of construction, but by fits and in fragments displays a rare grace of fancy, a keen eye for the beauty of nature, and a delicate ear for rhythm. The description of the army of the fairies is spirited, and the lines which usher it in are nature-poetry of very high merit. The song, "O May, thou art a pleasant time," and the dirge, "Wail! wail ye o'er the dead!" are specimens of Darley's art scarcely, if at all, inferior. More than twice or thrice Darley rose into the higher regions of lyrical verse, and he never deserved the almost complete oblivion which till lately had overtaken him. The unfinished *Nepenthe*, though less charming and perhaps still more uneven than *Sylvia*, was stronger and more daring. It showed no trace of exhaustion of the poetic

faculty; yet, except a few lyrics, it was the last work of Darley that is worth naming. It failed as *Sylvia* had failed. Jacob had at least Leah when he served a second seven years for Rachel; but Darley could hardly live for another seven years on such unsubstantial fare as a chance phrase of approval. His career was practically at an end; and eleven years after the publication of *Nepenthe* he died a disappointed and broken man. Darley was partly to blame for his own failure, for he showed something less than common sense in the management of his works at their publication. But his contemporaries can hardly be acquitted of an almost Bœotian dulness in their failure to appreciate the exquisite grace of his lyrics.

Beddoes was the only one of the writers of the interregnum who may be fairly described as a "lost leader," an "inheritor of unfulfilled renown"; and the reason was that he, like Taylor, lacked *unum necessarium*. A great statesman has said that "the great statesman must have two qualities,—the first is prudence, the second imprudence"; and the saying may be adapted to the poets. The great poet likewise must have two qualities; and the first is obedience to law, the second disobedience. Henry Taylor had the first, Beddoes had the second; and the union of the two would have made a very great poet. But Beddoes's wonderful imagination was always unrestrained, and the volumes of his poetry are little more than the scraps and fragments of what he might have produced. His career was strange and irregular, like his verse. His first literary venture was *The Improvisatore* (1821), a poem in three "fyttes," published when he was only eighteen; and it was immediately followed by *The Bride's Tragedy* (1822), a play written not for the stage, but for the study. Both of these appeared while Beddoes was still an undergraduate of Oxford. For some three years more he continued to write busily, intending to make literature his profession. He executed many fragments. In the spring of 1825 he writes to his friend Kelsall that he is "thinking of a very Gothic-styled tragedy," *Death's Jest-Book*; and in October, 1826, he declares it to be finished. Yet after *The Bride's Tragedy* nothing except one or two fugitive pieces was published during the lifetime of Beddoes. He could hardly

have been seriously discouraged by the treatment of his two volumes; for *The Bride's Tragedy* was fairly well received. But he was conscious that he could never win popularity: "Of course no one will ever read it," he says of *Death's Jest-Book*; and he suddenly determined to abandon literature and follow his father's profession of medicine. This resolution led to that residence in Germany to which reference has been made in an earlier chapter. There or in Switzerland he spent nearly all the rest of his life. He died by suicide in the hospital of Basel. *Death's Jest-Book* was published in the year after the author's death by his friend and literary executor, Kelsall; and a volume of miscellaneous poems followed in 1851.

Beddoes is an extraordinary mixture of the highly artificial and the absolutely inevitable in poetry. Of his *Death's Jest-Book*, his editor, Mr Gosse, declares that "no play in literature was less of a spontaneous creation, or was further from achieving the ideal of growing like a tree[1]"; and this is undoubtedly true of it as a whole. It is forced and tortured into the appearance of a tragedy. There is only one "whole" among the works of Beddoes, *The Bride's Tragedy*; and the abortive fragments of *The Second Brother* and *Torrismond* and *The Last Man*, as well as the numerous beginnings, endings and middles of *Death's Jest-Book*, show how difficult the art of construction was to him. In the letter dedicatory of *The Bride's Tragedy* he affirms "the flourishing condition of dramatic literature" in his own day; and all his ambitious efforts were of the dramatic sort. Yet all his genius failed to make him a dramatist. He could write noble blank verse and glorious lyrics, and could throw the most striking lights upon character; but in the art of construction he was hopelessly inferior to men who had scarcely a gleam of his poetic insight.

His works, then, including *Death's Jest-Book*, are really a collection of fragments; but the judgment pronounced upon the fragments must be widely different from that passed upon the whole. The best of them are singularly spontaneous in the true sense; which does not at all imply that they were written "with the graceful and negligent ease of a man of quality." Spontaneity

[1] *Poetical Works of Beddoes, Introduction*, xxxvii.

in literature is achieved when the author, having something to say, says it in the manner most perfectly fitting its character, whether that manner be reached with labour or mastered easily. It is as much a property of the high-wrought lyrics of Shelley as of the simple songs of Burns. The "conceits" of the seventeenth-century poets are frequently wrong only because they are in the wrong place; the metaphors of Shakespeare in scenes of intense passion are often of the same order. We call the former artificial because they are arbitrary; the latter are natural, though they must have been won with sweat of soul. It is in this sense that the fragments of Beddoes, both lyrical and dramatic, are among the most spontaneous verse of recent times. Any of Beddoes's better-known lyrics, such as *Dream-Pedlary*, or *Wolfram's Dirge*, would illustrate what is meant. The following dirge, which is inferior to none of them, is less known and is equally good for illustration:—

"To-day is a thought, a fear is to-morrow,
And yesterday is our sin and our sorrow;
And life is a death,
Where the body's the tomb,
And the pale sweet breath
Is buried alive in its hideous gloom.
Then waste no tear,
For we are the dead; the living are here,
In the stealing earth, and the heavy bier.
Death lives but an instant, and is but a sigh,
And his son is unnamed immortality,
Whose being is thine. Dear ghost, so to die
Is to live,—and life is a worthless lie.—
Then we weep for ourselves, and wish thee good-bye."

Death's Jest-Book is strange, wild and chaotic, yet wonderfully interesting throughout. Beddoes, says Mr Gosse, even as a child displayed a "precocious tendency to a species of mocking metaphysics[1]." If so, the boy was in this case emphatically father of the man; for both the mockery and the metaphysics are here. Beddoes disguised his thought under the Gothic garb of the grotesque, but the charm of his work is its rare power of sugges-

[1] *Introduction*, xx.

tion. Carried back in imagination to the date of its composition, *Death's Jest-Book* becomes one of the earliest and most remarkable manifestations of the spirit of the rising generation. The German influence is already there. The preferences of Beddoes, when he became thoroughly familiar with the Germans, are instructive. Goethe wrung admiration from him; but his heart went out spontaneously to Tieck and the ultra-romantic writers. The first was a genius too sane and round and orderly for him, while the lawlessness and morbidness of the ultra-romantic writers answered to something in his own nature.

But the most remarkable thing in Beddoes is the Elizabethan note in his work; which is also a note of the time. It is heard alike in the lyrics, in the blank verse of all the dramatic pieces, and in the prose passages of *Death's Jest-Book*. Especially in his lyrics, Beddoes has the note of Elizabethan song in a degree which is unequalled. He caught the tone, not once or twice, but many times. He was probably induced to study the Elizabethans by Coleridge and Lamb and Hazlitt; but it is not mere imitation: it is rather the Elizabethan spirit re-incarnate in a man of the nineteenth century. Beddoes was far too daring for imitation; and he had also too sound a conception of what was needed in order to give life to the literature of his own age. Just about the time when the idea of *Death's Jest-Book* was budding in his mind, he writes to Kelsall about an Elizabethan revival: "These reanimations are vampire-cold. Such ghosts as Marloe (*sic*), Webster, etc., are better dramatists, better poets, I dare say, than any contemporary of ours, but they are ghosts—the worm is in their pages,—and we want to see something that our great-grandsires did not know. With the greatest reverence for all the antiquities of the drama, I still think that we had better beget than revive, attempt to give the literature of this age an idiosyncrasy and spirit of its own, and only raise a ghost to gaze on, not to live with[1]." The man who wrote thus was the last who would have set himself the task of writing in a by-gone style; and we must ascribe the remarkable similarity of tone between his work and that of the Elizabethans to a kinship of birth, not one of adoption. His

[1] *Introduction*, xxiv.

mind was cast in their mould; conceptions came to him in the same fashion as they came to them. Take, for example, the speech of Isbrand to Siegfried over the body of Wolfram:—

"Dead and gone! a scurvy burthen to this ballad of life. There lies he, Siegfried; my brother, mark you; and I weep not, nor gnash the teeth, nor curse; and why not, Siegfried? Do you see this? So should every honest man be: cold, dead, and leaden-coffined. This was one who would be constant in friendship, and the pole wanders: one who would be immortal, and the light that shines upon his pale forehead now, through yonder gewgaw window, undulated from its star hundreds of years ago. That is constancy, that is life. O moral nature[1]!"

Or, in verse, take Athulf's description of Amala:—

"So fair a creature! of such charms compact
As nature stints elsewhere; which you may find
Under the tender eyelid of a serpent,
Or in the gurge of a kiss-coloured rose,
By drops and sparks: but when she moves, you see,
Like water from a crystal overfilled,
Fresh beauty tremble out of her and lave
Her fair sides to the ground. Of other women,
(And we have beauteous in this court of ours,)
I can remember whether nature touched
Their eye with brown or azure, where a vein
Runs o'er a sleeping eyelid, like some streak
In a young blossom; every grace count up,
Here the round turn and crevice of the arm,
There the tress-bunches, or the slender hand
Seen between harpstrings gathering music from them:
But where she is, I'm lost in her abundance,
And when she leaves me I know nothing more,
(Like one from whose awakening temples rolls
The cloudy vision of a god away,)
Than that she was divine[2]."

This almost Shakespearean opulence is unquestionably the outflow of Beddoes's own mind; and as certainly it has the boldness and the massiveness of "the spacious days." But besides the Elizabethan strain we detect in Beddoes the note of Shelley and

[1] *Death's Jest-Book*, II. i. [2] *ibid.* II. ii.

Keats; and herein again he was a pioneer, for the new age was the age of their disciples. He has indeed been called "a Gothic Keats"; and it is possible that he was fundamentally more akin to Keats than to Shelley; but on the other hand his resemblance to the latter is more obvious. It would not be easy to find a passage as redolent of Keats as the song from *Torrismond*, "How many times do I love thee, dear?" is redolent of Shelley. But the traces of both are evident; and the very union is again characteristic of the time. Shelley and Keats are poets between whom there are very wide differences. The one is intellectual, the other sensuous; the one is abstract, the other concrete; the one is in the clouds, the other, without being in the least earthy, has a firm footing on earth. Shelley, like Byron, was a poet of revolt, keen to solve the problem of the rights of man, and all on fire to redress social wrongs; Keats, absorbed in the religion of beauty, cared for none of these things. It was to him no mere figure of speech, but a literal fact, that beauty was truth, and he could hardly understand how truth could be reached by a process of reasoning; but the son-in-law of Godwin, devotee as he was of beauty, understood the mystery very well. He was a critic and philosopher as well as a poet. Yet notwithstanding all this, those who have been influenced by Shelley have almost without exception been influenced by Keats; and while Beddoes was drawn towards the former by his intellect, he was drawn towards the latter by his imagination.

The growth in popularity of Shelley and Keats is a subject worthy of a moment's attention; and the group to which Beddoes belonged were among the earliest and most devoted of their followers. In the fourth decade of the century the growth was considerable; but their popularity was then quite recent, and it was not really wide. In his review of Tennyson's *Poems* in 1833, Lockhart ironically retracted the censures which had been passed by *The Quarterly Review* upon Keats, and spoke of "the unbounded popularity which has carried it [*Endymion*] through we know not how many editions; which has placed it on every table; and, what is still more unequivocal, familiarized it in every mouth." But there must have been great exaggeration in this; at least,

Blackwood's Magazine in 1844 misspelt the name of Keats; and Rossetti, who began to study him about 1845 or 1846, imagined himself to be "one of the earliest strenuous admirers of Keats[1]." Rossetti was certainly wrong; but he never could have made such a mistake if Keats had been well and widely known. About Shelley, Tennyson knew nothing until he went to Cambridge. Browning at the age of fourteen accidentally saw in a second-hand book-shop a little volume described as "Mr Shelley's Atheistical Poem, very scarce." He begged his mother to get him Shelley's works; but no local bookseller had ever heard the name, and they had to be procured from London. Along with them, Mrs Browning "brought also three volumes of the still less known John Keats, on being assured that one who liked Shelley's works would like these also[2]." Thus early were the two names linked together, and so deep was the ignorance about the two poets even after they were both in the grave. The few who were better instructed were without influence. Peacock, the satirist as well as the friend of Shelley, knew; so did John Hamilton Reynolds, whose portrait hangs now in the National Portrait Gallery inscribed with the words, "the friend of Keats"; so did Charles Jeremiah Wells; so, of course, did Beddoes, the student of everything romantic. But these men had no following and hardly any audience: they had nothing but poetic taste. The fact that they gave their suffrages to the neglected poets was an indication that the day of those poets would come; but it did little to bring that day nearer. Their "discovery" by the Cambridge contemporaries of Tennyson was more effectual.

The same union of the Elizabethan spirit with something derived from Keats and Shelley is to be found in the work of Charles Jeremiah Wells (1800–1879) and in that of Thomas Wade (1805–1875); and unfortunately there is to be found in them also the same ostentatious defiance of or indifference to the requirements of the stage. Herein, of course, the nineteenth century writers were unfaithful to the Elizabethan tradition; and the difference is highly interesting. Shakespeare is almost as

[1] *D. G. Rossetti: his Family Letters*, i. 100.

[2] Mrs Sutherland Orr's *Life of Browning*, 40.

remarkable for his practical sagacity as he is for his poetic gift; but the men of the Elizabethan revival sometimes seem to value themselves on the absence of that practical sagacity, as applied to matters of the theatre. The fact is a sure proof that they lacked the true dramatic instinct, the end of which is to find its expression on the stage. All pleas for the closet drama are conclusively answered by the appeal to experience, which shows that in all ages and in all countries the really great dramatists have been able to satisfy the requirements of representation, and have contrived to be poetical without ceasing to be practical.

In 1822 Wells published a volume in the vein of Boccaccio entitled *Stories after Nature*; but the work on which his fame must wholly rest is *Joseph and his Brethren* (1823), the history of which is too curious to be omitted. On its publication, *Joseph and his Brethren* passed unnoticed, except, as the event proved, by a discerning few; and Wells seems to have calmly accepted himself as a literary failure, and ceased to write. About twenty or thirty years afterwards, however, he was induced by the urgency of two or three admirers to revise the book; but before it could be published the copy was lost. Later still, the warm praise of two great poets, Rossetti and Swinburne, induced Wells to undertake a second revision, and in 1876 the poem was issued in the form in which it is now known.

Joseph and his Brethren is not a true drama, and Wells can hardly be said to have seriously attempted to make it one; but it is a very fine dramatic poem. The action often pauses for dialogue and soliloquy which are incredible under the given circumstances; and the scenes might be added to, or diminished, or changed in their order, indefinitely. The poem therefore must be judged rather by its parts than as a whole. The characterisation, in Joseph and Reuben, and above all in Phraxanor, Potiphar's wife, is excellent. The last is a profound and subtle study of a woman unprincipled and sensuous, but great in intellect, in beauty, and in a certain evil charm which is not wholly lost even in the scene where she woos Joseph. That scene, the most difficult to manage, is likewise the triumph of the book. The introductory dialogue between Phraxanor and her

attendant is wholly admirable, and Phraxanor's two speeches, on the power of love and on the want of truth in women, are great. Scarcely less excellent is the stormy outburst of Reuben, when he turns upon his brethren after searching the pit and finding no Joseph. The general mode of conception recalls Marlowe; but there are constant suggestions of Shakespeare throughout the poem,—not imitations, but rather instances of community of thought. There is often a Shakespearean breadth in single lines or phrases; thus,

> "A little secret is a tempting thing
> Beyond wide truth's confession."

And there is a Shakespearean ring in this metaphor:—

> "Great Conscience is task-master to the will,
> And lets it forth as men hold bears in chains,
> To have them back, and whip them at the fault."

Along with the name of Wells is commonly mentioned that of one of his earliest panegyrists, Wade, who, in a note to *The Contention of Death and Love*, speaks of the verse of Wells as in "the same stream of sublime, subtle and unsurpassed poetry" as *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. But a better justification of the conjunction of the names is the similarity between the two men, though it is a similarity which is striking rather than close. Both illustrate the influence of the Elizabethan revival; both follow Marlowe,—of whom and of Webster there is more than of Shakespeare in the movement; and both are influenced by Keats; though Wells was affected by him far less than Wade. Here the resemblance ends. Wells, though not a dramatist, was essentially dramatic in the type of his mind, while Wade was not. Wells was the more forcible, Wade by far the more polished and regular in his work. In Wells there is little of the influence of Shelley, in Wade there is a great deal.

Wade's career opened with a volume of *Poems* (1825), which was followed by two dramas, *Woman's Love* (1828) and *The Jew of Arragon* (1830). The latter is interesting both for its *motif* and for the fate which that *motif* brought upon it. Dealing with the persecution of the Jews by the Christians, the author clearly shows

that his sympathies are on the side of the former. The result had been predicted by Mrs Kemble. The play was damned by an audience which could not tolerate the championship of the Jews, and which had seen *The Merchant of Venice* without a suspicion that possibly Shakespeare might have thought there was something to say on the side of Shylock.

Wade wrote at least one play afterwards, but it remains unpublished; and the fact that he was by this failure diverted from the stage is not to be regretted. Though there is poetry in his dramas, Wade's true gift was rather of the lyrical order. He had been for some years contributing to *The Monthly Repository*; and in 1835 he gathered his contributions together in a volume which is usually known by its shortened title, *Mundi et Cordis Carmina*. The contents of this volume, certain miscellaneous sonnets, and four poems which were published separately in pamphlet form in 1837 and 1839, are Wade's best contributions to literature.

The sonnets, which are somewhat free in construction, are often good, and occasionally they reach excellence. *Birth and Death*, for example, is fine alike in conception and in execution. But on the whole, Wade is at his best in the lyrics and miscellaneous poems whose metre is somewhat simpler than that of the sonnet. Probably he never wrote anything finer than *Helena*. Modelled on Keats's *Isabella*, it bears the stamp of imitation on its face; but this fact detracts little from its value. When poetry is genuine, and is the sincere expression of the poet's own spirit, very little importance need be attached to similarities, or even to conscious imitation. There are in Milton and Tennyson a thousand resemblances to Virgil, but no one thinks the less of those two poets on account of them.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW KINGS: TENNYSON AND BROWNING

"THE King is dead: long live the King," is the cry of the citizen in times of political change; but the kings of thought succeed each other with no such startling rapidity. "The king is dead," was the cry of contemporaries when Byron died at Missolonghi, but they could only gaze helplessly around and ask, "Whom shall we crown?" Looking back with the wisdom born of years we can see that the answer came in 1833, the date printed on the title-page of Tennyson's second volume of verse, which closes his apprentice period of authorship, the year of Browning's *Pauline*, the year when Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* began to run its course in *Fraser's Magazine*. But the wisdom born of years is not granted till the years have passed. There was a time of struggle yet between Carlyle and any adequate recognition of his power, it was not till 1842 that Tennyson achieved popularity, and it was longer still before the world became conscious of the greatness of Browning.

In respect of poetry, the period between the close of the interregnum and the end of the nineteenth century may be roughly divided into three parts. The first, extending to about 1850, is marked by the rise of two great poets, Tennyson and Browning. The second, from 1850 to 1875, is the period of their greatest predominance, though even at the latter date Browning had not yet reached his widest popularity. In 1875 Tennyson's dramatic period began, and by that date all Browning's greatest

work was done. The Spasmodic School had flourished and faded, the Pre-Raphaelites had produced their best poems, Clough was dead and Matthew Arnold had written nearly all his verse. The third period is too close to our own time for detailed examination. It will concern us chiefly for the sake of those who had won fame before it began. Tennyson and Browning are still the leading names; but in a certain sense their day is past, and in the younger poets we detect the struggle after ideals which are not the ideals of the older men.

Alfred Tennyson (1809–1892) deserves that close attention which is due to one who was not merely a great man but, with the exception of Carlyle, the most complete and comprehensive representative of his age. He was born in the Lincolnshire rectory of Somersby, in the midst of beautiful and characteristically English scenery, which has left its mark on many a line of his verse. The "English home" depicted on the arras in *The Palace of Art* might have been drawn from the rectory:—

> "Gray twilight pour'd
> On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
> Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
> A haunt of ancient Peace."

So profound was the "ancient peace" that even the thunder of Waterloo failed to break it, and while England was jubilant with victory, Somersby remained ignorant that the battle had been fought[1]. This seclusion doubtless helped to deepen the native Teutonic reserve into that shyness which characterised Tennyson through life. Little or no sympathy came to his boyhood or youth from the outside world. The bucolic mind of Lincolnshire neither knew nor cared about the literary tasks of the Tennyson family. Notwithstanding the fact that Alfred Tennyson was "Hercules as well as Apollo," and could beat the rustics in their rustic feats of strength, such impression as the Tennysons made was due more to the father than to the sons. And it was an impression of wonder rather than of sympathy. An old parish clerk described him as "a fine owd gentleman," but had nothing definite to say except that he "remembered on 'im dying." An

[1] *Life of Tennyson*, i. 5.

old housekeeper described him "'glowering' in his study, the walls of which were covered 'wi' 'eathen gods and goddesses wi'out cloäs[1].'"

But if there was quiet without, there was bustle and life enough within the home. Alfred Tennyson was the fourth of a family of eight sons and four daughters, all of whom, with the exception of the first-born, a boy, survived to maturity. Such a family made a society in itself, which was the more satisfying to the young Alfred because his two elder brothers showed strong literary tastes. The overshadowing greatness of Alfred Tennyson paralysed his brothers. Fastidious in their taste, they felt his superiority, and comparison with his work convinced them that their own fell short of the highest standard. This was partly the reason why, although both, Frederick as well as Charles, joined with Alfred in the early venture of the *Poems by Two Brothers* (1827), the eldest had reached middle life before he published anything independently, while the published work of Charles Tennyson Turner is limited to a volume of sonnets and a handful of lyrics.

Charles Tennyson (1808–1879), who took the name of Turner on his succession to his great-uncle Samuel Turner's estate, was decidedly the more independent and original of the two minor poets. He had true genius, but his qualities were fineness of perception and of touch rather than largeness of view. Naturally and rightly enough therefore he confined himself to the shorter kinds of verse, and preferred before all others the sonnet form. This was Charles Tennyson's choice from the first. He published in 1830 a slender volume of fifty sonnets; and his literary history is summed up in successive additions to these, until in the *Collected Sonnets, Old and New* (1880), the number has grown to considerably more than three hundred.

The sonnet suited Charles Tennyson as it suited Wordsworth, but for the opposite reason. It suited Wordsworth because he was compelled to select only the best from among the suggestions of a mind which tended to redundancy. It suited Charles Tennyson because his thoughts, true and beautiful in themselves,

[1] *Literary Anecdotes of the XIX Cent.* ii. 423.

were of narrow range and limited in number. And the circumstances of his life tended not to change, but rather to confirm and strengthen his innate disposition. He took orders, and passed the greater part of his life as vicar of Grasby in Lincolnshire, another "haunt of ancient peace," near to which lay the estate he had inherited. In tone and substance the sonnets befit the pastor of such a place. Some of them were suggested by the controversies which rent the Church and the criticisms which assailed her, but these are not the most happy. It is when he allows himself to be inspired by rural sights and sounds, by the human incidents of his professional experience, or by the charm of childhood, that Charles Tennyson deserves the praise bestowed on his sonnets by so competent a judge as Coleridge, and repeated by Alfred Tennyson, who declared a few of them to be "among the noblest in our language." "Noblest" is perhaps not a very happily chosen word; for the quality which raises the best sonnets of Charles Tennyson into high poetry is not that which thrills and awes in Drummond of Hawthornden's sonnet on John the Baptist, or in Milton's on the massacre in Piedmont, or in that of Wordsworth written upon Westminster Bridge; it is rather comparable to the charm of Wordsworth in a somewhat lowlier and homelier strain, or to the gentle beauty of some of the best of Hartley Coleridge's sonnets. Edward FitzGerald hit upon the right image when he compared them to violets.

Frederick Tennyson (1807–1898) published his first volume, *Days and Hours*, in 1854. After a long interval *The Isles of Greece* (1890) followed, then *Daphne and other Poems* (1891), and finally *Poems of the Day and Year* (1895). As regards date of publication, therefore, most of his work is the verse of an old man; but much of it is known to have been written, and some of it was printed, many years before its publication. As Scott declared that Campbell was "afraid of the shadow that his own fame cast before him," so, it is probable, was Frederick Tennyson afraid of the shadow of his brother's fame. And not without reason; for there is sufficient similarity between the poetic note of Frederick and that of Alfred Tennyson to make it probable that the weaker poet would have been accused of imitation and

condemned as an echo. At a later date, however, the fact that Frederick Tennyson was brother of the laureate had quite the opposite influence. Alfred Tennyson's fame was founded deep and built high; and his brother's productions were certain to be received sympathetically and to be studied with a natural curiosity, not merely for their own sake, but to see whether any light was thrown on the greater man's mind by the writings of one so near akin to him. And so it is probable that at the present day Frederick Tennyson's name is better known and his verse more read than they would have been but for his connexion with the most widely popular of recent English poets. For of the three poet-brothers he is decidedly the least. He not only falls far short of the greatness of Alfred, but he is destitute also of the exquisite touch of Charles. His verse is the outflow of a mind accomplished and sensitive, but hardly capacious enough to make the product memorable for its substance, and hardly delicate enough to give it the compensating grace of form. Its diffuseness will probably doom it to an early oblivion. Frederick Tennyson had more fluency than force. It was far easier for him to write many lines than to concentrate their meaning in a phrase; and when at last he was induced to publish, he did not eliminate what was redundant.

We have already seen the nature of the early influences which were brought to bear upon the three poet-brothers. Through the next stage also the influences were common to them all; for they passed from their father's home to Cambridge, and became members of the society of Trinity College in one of the most flourishing periods of the University. It will be worth while to pause a little over the Cambridge of that time, for English literature was in no small degree moulded by the young men who were gathered there.

For the birth of great men 1809 is the *annus mirabilis* of English history. Alfred Tennyson and William Ewart Gladstone and Charles Darwin all first saw the light then. If we look across the Atlantic we have to add Abraham Lincoln, the saviour of the Union, and, among men of letters, O. W. Holmes and E. A. Poe. In England, to the names of the giants we have to add those of

A. W. Kinglake, R. Monckton Milnes and Edward FitzGerald. Now it so happens that all the Englishmen except Gladstone went to Cambridge. Even if they had stood alone they would have sufficed to make an epoch in the intellectual history of the University. And they did not stand alone. Taking Alfred Tennyson, who matriculated at Trinity College in February, 1828, as the centre of the group, we find among his University contemporaries his two brothers, Frederick and Charles, both, like himself, poets. Three more members of the band, R. C. Trench, John Sterling and A. H. Hallam, were likewise endowed with more or less of the poetic faculty. Thackeray too was there, and, but for the overshadowing greatness of his gift for fiction and satire, there can be little doubt that he had the capacity to surpass them all in verse, Alfred Tennyson alone excepted. It was veritably "a nest of singing-birds." Besides these, James Spedding, Charles Merivale, J. M. Kemble, F. D. Maurice and Julius Hare all subsequently won distinction, and all were contemporaries of Alfred Tennyson. So was the witty and brilliant Charles Buller, who died in 1848 on the threshold of a parliamentary career which promised to raise him to the first rank of statesmen. And yet, though these were men of the highest talent, some for writing, some for speech, some for both, when in 1866 Lord Houghton, inaugurating the new club-house of the Cambridge Union Society, referred to the greatest speaker he had ever listened to, he meant none of them, but another contemporary whose name few have heard except through their biographies—Thomas Sunderland. Sunderland's brain gave way soon after his University career was over, and all the hopes which had clustered round him were blighted. Nearly all these men were known to one another, and many of them were united in the small club known from the number of its members as the Apostles.

Readers of *The Life of Macaulay* must be struck with the fact that the ruling passion in the Cambridge of his day was not literature but politics. Between his time and the time of Tennyson a great change had passed over the spirit of the University, and for literature the omens, as we read them now, were of the

brightest kind. There was power in abundance, it was power of the right sort, and it was stimulated by the right ambitions. Further, we can see now that it was power not imitative but essentially independent. This is manifest from the critical canons which more or less consciously governed these young men. They showed a marked originality in their taste. Cambridge was the centre of the growing cult of Wordsworth; and while Shelley and Keats were still unknown to the British public, Cambridge did much to draw them from their obscurity. It was through the agency of A. H. Hallam that *Adonais* was first printed in England. Young men as a rule are either iconoclasts or proselytisers, and the Cambridge youths were of the latter class. They began by spreading and confirming the faith within their own circle. *Poems by Two Brothers* affords sufficient evidence that down to the year before his entrance at Trinity the predominant influence over Tennyson was that of Byron. It soon ceased to be so. If he had not already found critical salvation before he went to the University he speedily found it there; for the cult of Shelley and Keats was the cult of the elect of Cambridge, and Alfred Tennyson was of the number.

The next step was to convert others. In their crusade they were fired by the chivalrous zeal of youth in the cause of men contemned and vilified, or at best neglected. They had to fight against popular indifference and critical disparagement. They had to fight against even the sister University. They proclaimed their allegiance and proved their zeal in a celebrated debate which took place at Oxford, whither delegates were sent by Cambridge. The delegates were Hallam, Sunderland and Milnes; and the last always suspected that he owed his *exeat* to a certain mist which he had allowed to rest on the mind of the Master, Dr Wordsworth, as to the particular poet who was to be defended by the Cambridge men. At the Oxford Union Francis Hastings Doyle had brought forward a motion, which he calls "an echo of Cambridge thought and feeling," and which was quite contrary to the almost universal opinion of Oxford, that Shelley was a greater poet than Byron. The purpose of the Cambridge men was to champion the poet whom Oxford had formerly expelled and

whom she still neglected. Manning summed up for Oxford, and according to Doyle the backbone of his speech was just this: "Byron is a great poet, we have all of us read Byron; but...if Shelley had been a great poet we should have read him also; but we none of us have done so. Therefore Shelley is not a great poet—*a fortiori* he is not so great a poet as Byron[1]." The argument from ignorance carried the day, as it has often done before and since; but nevertheless the seed dropped by the Cambridge enthusiasts germinated and grew.

This story is worth dwelling upon, because it indicates a most momentous change which was passing over English literary taste. The sun of Byron was set, the day of Wordsworth and Shelley and Keats was just about to dawn. The Oxford men were clinging to the past, the future was for the undergraduates of Cambridge. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that they *were* the future. Such was the genius of this group of young men that they could make the imaginative literature of England for the next generation in no small measure what they chose. In this contest they had indicated plainly enough the use to which they were likely to put their power, enthusiasm and genius.

At Cambridge, then, Tennyson's poetical education really began. The reading in English poetry of the authors of *Poems by Two Brothers* had certainly been narrow; but under the stimulus of the Apostles, and especially of Arthur Hallam, it soon widened. Tennyson grew surprisingly in intellectual stature. *Timbuctoo*, the prize poem of 1829, was by admiring friends and contemporaries judged to be "certainly equal to most parts of Milton[2]"; and though no one now would echo that opinion, the piece shows a great advance upon the *Poems by two Brothers*, and is perhaps almost as much above the average level of prize poems as it is below the standard of Milton. In the following year appeared Tennyson's first independent volume, *Poems, chiefly Lyrical* (1830), containing a number of pieces which were afterwards reprinted by Tennyson himself unchanged or with only minor alterations. Towards the close of 1832 a second volume was

[1] *Reminiscences*, 113.
[2] *Life of Lord Houghton*, i. 72.

published, bearing on the title-page the date 1833. This also was written under the influence of his early life and of Cambridge. Then followed a long silence of nearly ten years, broken only by *The Lover's Tale*, privately printed, and by the publication in periodicals of two short but exquisite poems, *St Agnes' Eve* and that lovely lyric which formed the germ of *Maud*,—"O that 'twere possible." Finally, in 1842, appeared the two volumes which have been declared to mark Tennyson's "decisive" appearance in poetry, and which close the first period of his poetic life.

No poet, not even Shakespeare, has a more consistent development than Tennyson; and the line of his development is from the purely artistic to the blend of thought with art. Tennyson agreed in substance with the criticism quoted in the preceding chapter from Henry Taylor; and his agreement is important as well as interesting, because he was great enough to supply what both he and Taylor considered to be lacking in their immediate predecessors. "I close with him," says Tennyson in a letter to Spedding, "in most that he says of modern poetry, tho' it may be that he does not take sufficiently into consideration the peculiar strength evolved by such writers as Byron and Shelley, who, however mistaken they may be, did yet give the world another heart and new pulses[1]." This acquiescence in Taylor's criticism indicates the fact that Tennyson was never of the school of Shelley; and though he did for a moment belong to that of Byron, the Byronic influence soon vanished. His opinion about Shelley was permanent: he repeated it long afterwards. Shelley, he said, "is often too much in the clouds for me[2]"; and there is very little of his own work that has the ring of Shelley. *The Lover's Tale* has been singled out as an instance; and rightly enough, notwithstanding the fact that it was written before Tennyson had ever seen a copy of Shelley's works[3]; for the germs of other things as well as disease may be carried in the air, and there are many ways in which new pulses may be started to beat.

The Lover's Tale, however, is exceptional. The poet who, among Tennyson's immediate predecessors, had by far the greatest

[1] *Life of Tennyson*, i. 141. [2] *ibid.* ii. 285. [3] *ibid.*

influence over him, was Keats, and next to him perhaps Coleridge. He put Keats, says his son, on a lofty pinnacle, declaring that "there is something of the innermost soul of poetry in almost everything he ever wrote[1]." The secret of the attraction is easily discovered; and the point of difference between the two poets also is not far to seek. The sensuousness of Keats attracted Tennyson, for no poet was more keenly alive than he to the importance of the sensuous element in verse, and none was more readily responsive to the suggestions of sense. His early poems were criticised for the excessive minuteness of observation they displayed. Lockhart ridiculed the "gummy" chestnut buds of *The Miller's Daughter* in the original version, the water-rat that plunged in the stream and the long green box of mignonette. The long green box remains, but the water-rat is gone now, and the literal fact of the gum is indicated by its effects, the glistening of the buds to the breezy blue. This literalness is far enough removed from the style of Keats, but it indicates that sensitiveness to impression on which the style of Keats is based. This was the quality which was earliest developed in Tennyson; and it was doubtless love of it which caused Edward FitzGerald to look back upon the poems of 1842 and the earlier volumes as embodying the true and the great Tennyson. FitzGerald never fully approved of the later poems, partly because he thought that from *The Princess* onwards Tennyson tried to put too much thought into his verse and overloaded it with politics and social philosophy and theology, things good in themselves, but in FitzGerald's opinion detrimental to poetry. This other element too was in Tennyson from the start, but it grew in importance. "One must," he said, "distinguish Keats, Shelley and Byron from the great sage poets of all, who are both great thinkers and great artists, like Æschylus, Shakespeare, Dante and Goethe[2]." Here is just Taylor's criticism in another form; and it shows clearly enough that Tennyson's ambition was to be, if not equal to, yet like, "the great sage poets of all."

By analysing the work of the most influential of Victorian poets and by observing the trend of change in him we may see,

[1] *Life*, ii. 286. [2] *ibid.* ii. 287.

with a vividness unrivalled elsewhere, both what poetry was at the beginning of this period, and what it was tending to become[1]. In the first two volumes the poet's art is, at its best, already exquisite; but it is as yet uncertain and immature. Tennyson, always an unsparing critic of himself—though he was impatient of other criticism,—judged his work in those volumes with a severity he never afterwards showed. Of the total number of eighty-six pieces he permanently rejected thirty-two. Moreover, of those which passed muster and were included among the poems of 1842, a considerable number underwent very extensive alterations. In the cases of *Œnone* and *The Palace of Art* the revision was so free as to make them almost new poems. Several other permanent favourites,—for example, *A Dream of Fair Women*, *The Lady of Shalott* and *The Miller's Daughter*,—were likewise greatly changed. No one who is familiar with these five poems only in their final form can judge of them as they appeared in the text of 1832; for no small portion of the charm of all of them is due to the poet's alterations, additions and excisions. Tennyson's amendments well repay study. They are as a rule singularly judicious[2]. In most cases they are suggested by his own maturing taste and growing skill, but he does not disdain to learn from his critics. The best thing that can be said for Lockhart's famous criticism in *The Quarterly Review* is that Tennyson himself has in a measure stamped it with approval by altering or omitting most of the pieces and passages objected to.

Omission and revision on a scale so extensive as occurs with the contents of the volumes of 1830 and 1832 seem to justify the

[1] Every one who takes up Tennyson with this object in view will find himself deeply indebted to the scholarly edition of the early poems of Tennyson, by J. Churton Collins. It contains all the poems up to 1842, with complete materials for tracing all the changes of reading, omissions and additions, to that date.

[2] Browning, however, thought otherwise. Writing to Alfred Domett he says of the *Poems* of 1842: "The alterations are insane. *Whatever* is touched is spoiled. There is some woeful mental infirmity in the man—he was months buried in correcting the press of the last volume, and in that time began spoiling the new poems (in proof) as hard as he could." Kenyon's *Robert Browning and Alfred Domett*, p. 40.

inference that Tennyson felt himself to be still an apprentice in the art of poetry. The fact that the process of re-writing never afterwards took place in anything like an equal degree may be taken to indicate that by 1842 he judged himself to have attained maturity. It is also significant that of all the pieces in the collection of 1842, only one was afterwards denied by the poet a place in his collected works. But a closer examination of the contents of the two early volumes, and a more minute comparison of the text with that of the poems of 1842, suggests further inferences. In the first place, it is remarkable that of the twenty-four pieces adopted from the volume of 1830 into the *Poems* of 1842, not one was vitally or even considerably altered. Tennyson's second volume contributed sixteen pieces to the collection of 1842, and of these seven had undergone important alterations. At first sight the conclusion would seem to be that the poet felt that in 1832 he had fallen back in his art. A sounder inference would be that he had changed, and that he was less master of that which he attempted to do in 1832 than of what he had attempted two years earlier. The characteristic subjects of the *Poems, chiefly Lyrical* are much lighter than those of the volume which followed it. In the earlier volume an occasional grand note is struck, as in *The Poet*, an occasional tone of passion is heard, as in *The Ballad of Oriana*, or of deep human sorrow, as in *Mariana*. But the more prevalent note is one of light, airy, playful grace. Most of the "moonshine maidens," as *The Quarterly Review* aptly called them, are there,—Claribel, Lilian, Madeline and Adeline. So are *The Merman* and *The Mermaid*. Some of these pieces are exquisite, but none of them is or attempts to be profound. None of them was subsequently changed in any important way.

Very different is the table of contents in the later volume. The portrait-gallery was indeed enlarged by the addition of *Eleänore*, of *Margaret* and of *Rosalind*. But the keynote of the volume was struck rather in the five pieces which have already been named as examples of Tennyson's careful revision. Along with these may be mentioned, as among the most important of the contents of the volume, *The Lotos-Eaters* and *The May Queen*. To the last was added in 1842 the third part; but it is the only

one of the seven which remains otherwise without change of importance. The exquisitely musical *Lotos-Eaters* had its characteristic charm in the first version; but the substitution in 1842 of the present conclusion for the original one removed blemishes and added beauties which raise it to the first rank among the poems of Tennyson and of Tennyson's century.

The points which distinguish all these poems from the contents of the earlier volume (except perhaps *The Poet*) are their more ambitious design and their greater force. The difference is unmistakable in *A Dream of Fair Women* and *The Palace of Art*. It is plain enough too in such idyllic pictures as we find in *Œnone* and *The Miller's Daughter*; and, though less obvious, it is not less real in those pieces of pure loveliness, *The Lady of Shalott* and *The Lotos-Eaters*. It might be unwise to insist much on the allegorical interpretation of the former; but he who can read such poems and feel his life and character unenriched has still to learn how to use poetry. As truly as an "impulse from a vernal wood" was a form of teaching to Wordsworth, so truly, to him who has brain and heart to understand, is the beauty of such poems instructive beyond all sermons on the deepest problems of life.

And this is the real significance of the change of which we see the beginnings in Tennyson in the two years between the issue of his first and the issue of his second volume of poems. In 1830 he is not indeed frivolous, but still less is he distinguished for "high seriousness." A Keatsian worship of beauty, without as yet Keats's full conviction of its identity with truth, is his characteristic. The task which he set himself in 1832 was the exhibition of their identity. Hence the larger scope of his subjects and the greater weight of his style. Hence too the comparative failure, the necessity of unsparing revision afterwards. The Tennyson of 1830 contented himself with a lower aim, and he hit his mark. The Tennyson of 1832 aimed at the sun. The arrow fell short; but the very effort taught him more than the earlier success, and prepared the way for the triumph of 1842.

This attempt to supply the intellectual deficiency of contemporary poetry gives interest to the comparison between the two early volumes. Another interest emerges when we set these volumes

beside the *Poems* of 1842. It is the interest of comparing promise with performance, effort with achievement. In 1842 Tennyson has attained the fulness of his stature as a poet. In the opinion of some good judges he never afterwards did so good work. Coventry Patmore seems to have agreed with Edward FitzGerald; for he declared that the greatest part of all that was essential in Tennyson's work was contained in the second of the two volumes of 1842[1]. The intervening ten years had transformed the youth of twenty-three into the mature man of thirty-three. But life is better measured by experience than by time; and during those ten years Tennyson had come in contact with the great facts of life. A brief biographical sketch will help towards an understanding of the new qualities displayed in 1842.

In 1831 Tennyson left Cambridge, and soon afterwards his father died. In 1833 an even heavier blow fell in the death of Arthur Henry Hallam (1811–1833), his own chosen friend and the betrothed of his sister Emily. Though Hallam was the younger man of the two, his had been the leading mind in the friendship. Under the guidance of his distinguished father, he had enjoyed a culture wider than Tennyson's, and he was able to open up to his friend new fields of thought and to suggest fresh lines of study. It would be difficult to exaggerate the influence exercised over Tennyson by the life, and still more by the death, of this friend. Hallam's *Remains in Verse and Prose* (1834) necessarily leaves undecided the question, what would have been his place in English literature if he had lived; but it indicates that it would have been at least a considerable and might have been a great one. The book contains nothing that is intrinsically great, but some things which are highly promising; and the unanimous judgment of all, both seniors and coaevals, who knew the author, is still more impressive than the *Remains*. His father, judicial-minded as he was, might have been misled by the partiality of a parent; but Henry Hallam's opinion of his son's talents was not a whit higher than that of the members of the Apostles Club, all of whom were themselves men of rare ability,

[1] *Memoirs of Patmore*, i. 198.

and some of them men of genius; and the fact that Hallam dominated Tennyson is perhaps the most impressive of all.

But great as was the influence of the living Hallam, that of Hallam dead was more potent still. The friendship between the two young men was one of that kind, almost as rare as the highest genius, of which the classical instance is the friendship of David and Jonathan. It produces all the effects of the ideal friendship of the Greek philosophers; it spreads beyond and towers above everything embraced under the same name in ordinary parlance; it surpasses the tie of blood, though that is much more powerful than ordinary friendship, and even rivals the love of sex for sex. It is not *In Memoriam* alone which bears witness to the astonishing depth and the all-potent influence of this friendship. After the death of Hallam the whole tone of Tennyson's poetry changes. As if an effacing sponge had been drawn across the past, the dilettante disappears. The artist remains, but he is an artist full of serious purpose: there are no more puerilities like the "Darling room." *The Two Voices*, originally entitled *Thoughts of a Suicide*, shows what a struggle it cost Tennyson to rise above the depression caused by the death of his friend; but still more significant is the seriousness and the lofty tone of such poems as *Ulysses* and *Lucretius* and *Morte d'Arthur*, the passionate grief of "O that 'twere possible," and the mournful wail of "Break, break, break."

Other cares and sorrows followed the death of Hallam. The parting from Somersby was painful; but far deeper was the pain of parting enforced by poverty between Tennyson and Emily Sellwood. They had been lovers from the time of the marriage of Charles Tennyson in 1836, but on account of the poor prospects of the poet all correspondence between them ceased in 1840. They did not meet again till 1850, when the success of *In Memoriam* had so improved Tennyson's position that he could once more think of marriage.

During those ten years therefore the discipline of life had come to Tennyson in ample measure. Much reading had also been crowded into them. His scholarship, of which the foundation had been laid at Cambridge, had been widened and deepened. Many

a line of his verse bears witness to his careful reading both of the classics and of the literature of modern languages, especially that of his own country. He read thoughtfully and with purpose. His friends urged, and he believed, that it was his function to penetrate, and as an artist to interpret, the inner meaning of the modern spirit—to find a poetic expression alike for its religion and for its science. That he won no small measure of success in what must have been the more difficult part of his purpose is attested by the fact that Norman Lockyer declared Tennyson's mind to be "saturated with astronomy[1]," and that Huxley pronounced him to be "the first poet since Lucretius who has understood the drift of science[2]." As to the other side, *In Memoriam* has been as a gospel to thousands of souls who have felt the movement of modern thought and yet been conscious of the need of religion.

Of the two volumes of 1842, the first consisted almost wholly of pieces which had been published before, while the second contained only two poems which were not new. It is, then, mainly to the second that we must turn for evidence of Tennyson's development. We find in it the continuation of many things the beginnings of which are seen in the volume of 1832. The English idyllic strain, first heard in *The Miller's Daughter* and *The May Queen*, is sounded again in *The Gardener's Daughter* and *Dora* and *Audley Court*. Arthurian legend had already won the poet's attention in *The Lady of Shalott*: a serious study of it is indicated by *Sir Galahad, Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, and above all by *Morte d'Arthur*, perhaps Tennyson's greatest achievement in blank verse. The same volume contains also many things of which Tennyson had given no previous example. "Break, break, break," the most perfect and thoughtful of his songs hitherto published, is in this volume. There too is that marvellous classical idyll, *Ulysses*, and there are *Locksley Hall* and *The Two Voices* and *The Vision of Sin*.

It cannot be doubted that these poems embody a serious philosophy of life, and that the author of them must be regarded both as an artist and as an intellectual force. In Tennyson's own

[1] Quoted in *The Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1907.
[2] *Life of Huxley*, ii. 338.

judgment, the attempt made ten years previously to write verse in the grand style had failed. From the fact that no changes of importance were found necessary afterwards, we may conclude that he considered the second attempt successful; and the world has ratified his judgment. We might naturally suppose that this success was the slow result of ten years' labour; but the known facts point rather to the conclusion that it came of a sudden. *Ulysses* was written soon after the death of Hallam, and so were some of the stanzas of *In Memoriam*; Spedding saw *The Two Voices* and *Sir Galahad* in 1834; and the *Morte d'Arthur* was read to Edward FitzGerald in 1835. Moreover, the grand political poems, "You ask me why, tho' ill at ease," "Of old sat Freedom on the heights" and "Love thou thy land with love far brought," can all be traced back to the years 1833 and 1834. It is uncertain how far any or all of these poems may have undergone revision between the date of their composition and that of their publication; but at least it seems clear that in 1833 and 1834 Tennyson made the greatest advance of his life, and that this advance was connected with the death of Arthur Hallam. We know that *Ulysses* and *The Two Voices* and "O that 'twere possible," as well as the early fragments of *In Memoriam*, were directly associated in Tennyson's mind with him.

A marked feature of the poems of 1842 is their unity and completeness. In the earlier pieces, as Tennyson's own alterations show, there are frequent irrelevances and redundancies. The young poet seems to be unable to bear the pain of suppressing any of his verses; and this weakness was the occasion of one of Lockhart's gibes, which went home. "Mr Tennyson," he says, "manages this delicate business [the introduction of redundant matter] in a new and better way; he says, with great candour and simplicity, 'If this poem were not already too long, *I should have added* the following stanzas,' and *then he adds them* —or, 'the following lines are manifestly superfluous, as a part of the text, but they may be allowed to stand as a separate poem,' *which they do*;—or, 'I intended to have added something about statuary, but I found it very difficult;...but I had finished the statues of *Elijah* and *Olympias*—judge whether I have succeeded'

—and then we have these two statues." Tennyson's good sense told him that Lockhart was right. Aubrey de Vere relates a story which shows what importance he attached in later days to the unity of his poems. "One night, after he had been reading aloud several of his poems, all of them short, he passed one of them to me and said, 'What is the matter with that poem?' I read it and answered, 'I see nothing to complain of.' He laid his finger on two stanzas of it, the third and fifth, and said, 'Read it again.' After doing so I said, 'It has more completeness and totality about it; but the two stanzas you cover are among its best.' 'No matter,' he rejoined, 'they make the poem too long-backed; and they must go, at any sacrifice.' 'Every short poem,' he remarked, 'should have a definite shape, like the curve, sometimes a single, sometimes a double one, assumed by a severed tress or the rind of an apple when flung on the floor[1].'"

It may be questioned whether Tennyson ever well understood the building up of long poems; but he was extremely skilful in the construction of short pieces, and after 1832 he studied the art with the greatest care. The lighter pieces from the beginning, and from 1832 onwards the weightier ones as well, owe a great deal of their charm to the unity of impression which they convey. Always a poet of the fitting word and the exquisite phrase, Tennyson in his maturity never forgot the importance of the setting. Thus, *Ulysses* is the round and flawless delineation of the stoical mind,

> "Strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

Few if any poems of equal length contain a greater number of gems of expression. It is absolutely free from anything that could be wished away, and to add anything to it would be "wasteful and ridiculous excess." *St Simeon Stylites* is a poem of a lower order; yet it is almost equally perfect in its own way as a picture of the diseased asceticism of the early saint. Again, *The Two Voices* and *The Vision of Sin* have the unity which belongs to a mental state vividly conceived. In *The Palace of Art* there is

[1] Appendix to *Life*, i. 506–7.

greater complexity; but there is a unity no less real. Every stanza is made to illustrate the soul centred in itself, proud of its own strength, feeding upon and satisfied with beauty, looking not beyond this world. A comparison between the text of 1832 and that of 1842 shows how far this unity is due to transposition here, and to excision or addition there. Whether Beckford was or was not the prototype of him who built his soul a lordly pleasure-house, at least it is clear that Tennyson had in his mind a conception of character as distinct as if he drew from life.

Perhaps the only important poem of 1842 which has not this convincing completeness is *A Dream of Fair Women*; and even in that there is a notable advance as compared with the original text. The "balloon stanzas" are cut out, of which Edward FitzGerald said that "they make a perfect poem by themselves without affecting the 'dream.'" But the best proof of the great advance which Tennyson had made in the art of construction is to be found in *The Lotos-Eaters*, a piece which can hardly be paralleled except in Spenser or in Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*. It was a delicious poem even as it stood originally; and few, if Tennyson had not helped them, would have been conscious of any want. It is the poem of sensuous indulgence and enjoyment. In the land of the lotos-eaters it seems "always afternoon." Work is hateful, "dreamful ease" is the only object of desire. Nay, so deep a drowsiness broods over the land that desire itself is a word too suggestive of action and effort to be appropriate. Now, in 1832 *The Lotos-Eaters* was already nearly perfect within its compass as a picture of this life of "dreamful ease." But by 1842 Tennyson had convinced himself that it was incomplete. To use his own figure, it ought to have been a double curve rather than a single one. A moral being may resolve to lead a life of voluptuous enjoyment; but, if he does, such a life will influence him morally as well as physically. The moral influence had been omitted in 1832: it is recognised in § 6 of the *Choric Song*, beginning, "Dear is the memory of our wedded lives," which was added in 1842. Partly for the same reason the original conclusion was omitted and a new one was substituted. The introduction of the epicurean gods suggests thoughts reach-

ing far beyond the lotos-land. But there were other grounds as well for this change. By the substitution Tennyson not only enriched *The Lotos-Eaters* in thought, but ennobled it in style. The two versions are worthy of comparison as a specimen of the numerous changes whereby from his youthful standard the poet struggled upward towards perfection. The closing lines in 1832 ran as follows:—

"We have had enough of motion,
Weariness and wild alarm,
Tossing on the tossing ocean,
Where the tuskèd sea-horse walloweth
In a stripe of grass-green calm,
At noontide beneath the lee;
And the monstrous narwhale swalloweth
His foam-fountains in the sea.
Long enough the wine-dark wave our weary bark did carry.
This is lovelier and sweeter,
Men of Ithaca, this is meeter,
In the hollow rosy vale to tarry,
Like a dreamy Lotos-eater, a delirious Lotos-eater!
We will eat the Lotos, sweet
As the yellow honeycomb,
In the valley some, and some
On the ancient heights divine;
And no more roam,
On the loud hoar foam,
To the melancholy home
At the limit of the brine,
The little isle of Ithaca, beneath the day's decline.
We'll lift no more the shattered oar,
No more unfurl the straining sail;
With the blissful Lotos-eaters pale
We will abide in the golden vale
Of the Lotos-land till the Lotos fail;
We will not wander more.
Hark! how sweet the horned ewes bleat
On the solitary steeps,
And the merry lizard leaps,
And the foam-white waters pour;
And the dark pine weeps,
And the lithe vine creeps,
And the heavy melon sleeps

On the level of the shore:
Oh! islanders of Ithaca, we will not wander more,
Surely, surely slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the ocean, and rowing with the oar,
Oh! islanders of Ithaca, we will return no more[1]."

It was a sound judgment which substituted for this passage the following beautiful lines:—

"We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd—down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more."

It would be easy to multiply examples of similar improvement in substance and style and rhythm. Thus, in the text of *The Palace of Art* now received a well-known stanza runs,

"One seem'd all dark and red—a tract of sand,
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large moon."

[1] From J. Churton Collins's edition.

In 1832 it stood thus :—

> "Some were all dark and red, a glimmering land
> Lit with a low round moon,
> Among brown rocks a man upon the sand
> Went weeping all alone."

And the three stanzas, among the finest in the poem, which now follow this, were an addition.

But in other respects still the later volumes contrast with the earlier. They show a far wider range of interests, a more catholic spirit, a deeper humanity. The young Tennyson betrays something of the temper of a dilettante; but in 1842, while he is more than ever an exquisite artist, he is also a profoundly earnest man, absorbed in his task of manufacturing, in Carlyle's phrase, some fragment of chaos into cosmos. Nearly all that Tennyson subsequently cared for is represented in the volumes of 1842. Few poets have been more patriotic; and we find there the three grand political poems, with their pride in England, scarcely equalled since Shakespeare glorified "this royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle." Social as well as political questions always filled Tennyson's mind; and here we have *Locksley Hall*. He was interested in character; and we have studies of moods of mind, like *Ulysses* and *St Simeon Stylites*. He was a student of the ultimate problems of religion and of ethics; and we have *The Two Voices*, *The Vision of Sin* and *The Palace of Art*. We have also, in a widely different strain, such gems as *St Agnes' Eve* and *Sir Galahad*. Finally, he was always, as a poet ought to be, a dreamer of dreams; and so we find in these volumes such a piece of pure fancy as *The Day-Dream*.

Southey died in 1843, and the laureateship vacated by him was very properly conferred upon Wordsworth. But the aged poet's day was past; and though the formal coronation was deferred for eight years longer, the majority of competent judges held that the name of the new king of English verse was Alfred Tennyson. He was worthy of the position not only as an artist, but because, emphatically and in the best sense, he was the most representative poet of his age. He was no less worthy in character. In the authoritative biography it is to be regretted that a natural,

but none the less mistaken, piety has smoothed away the scars and wrinkles, and with them not a little of the man. Tennyson could perfectly well afford to have the moodiness and gruffness frankly acknowledged; and there is in some of the authentic stories of such moods a raciness and humanity which give the poet a share of the charm of those authors who are loved as men and not merely as writers. The author of *In Memoriam* never comes so close to us as he does in such a story as that which Spedding tells, of how he dined with Tennyson at the Cock Tavern, on two chops, one pickle, two cheeses, one pint of stout, one pint of port and three cigars; and when they had finished Spedding had to take the poet's regrets to the Kembles; he could not go because he had the influenza[1]. The rich humanity of this tale prepares us, as nothing in Tennyson's earlier writings does, for the humorous pictures of rural characters in his later volumes.

In the case of Robert Browning (1812–1889) the intellectual element was even from the first excessive, and the purely artistic was always in danger of being crushed under it. There was therefore no room for the kind of development which we observe in Tennyson. But Browning too had a period of apprenticeship to serve, errors to commit and experiments to try, before he "found himself"; and in his case the first period may be taken as extending to 1846, the date of *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*. After that he seems to have convinced himself that the method of the regular drama was not for him; for *In a Balcony* (1855) is his only composition of later date which takes that form. The year 1846 was a turning-point also in Browning's private life, for it was the date of his marriage with Elizabeth Barrett.

Browning came of a family of modest means and modest position, and yet he owed not a little to his birth. The genius of the boy showed itself early, and the father's pride in his son is indicated by the fact that as early as 1824 he privately printed a small collection of his son's verses under the title of *Incondita*. The family were dissenters in religion, and in those days this fact cut a boy off from the public schools and the universities. Young

[1] Letter of Spedding, 1837, quoted in Reid's *Life of Houghton*, i. 192.

Browning was educated under a private tutor from 1826 to 1829; and in 1829–1830 he attended lectures at the University of London, afterwards University College. But what ruled his intellectual development was the fact that his father, a man of taste and culture, had filled his house with the best of books, in English and French, Latin and Greek. The poet's knowledge of German was never very great, but the Scotch and German blood in his veins was sufficient guarantee for the development of the Teutonic element in him, and no reader of his poetry needs to be assured of its presence. Growing up, then, in the language of O. W. Holmes, as familiar with books as a stable-boy is with horses, Robert Browning carried about with him through life the aroma of learning. Not only so, but his learning was something individual, independent, unexpected. He knew the beaten paths well, though not perhaps so well as some men more regularly trained; but he knew also many by-ways which few feet but his own had trodden. It is characteristic and instructive that when it was finally decided that he should adopt the profession of letters "he qualified himself for it by reading and digesting the whole of Johnson's dictionary[1]." Thus Browning gained the advantage of wide knowledge without the drawback of having his mind cast in any traditional mould. He would not have been a better poet, and he might have been a more commonplace one, had he graduated double first at Oxford or senior classic at Cambridge. His independence of the associations of the national Church and the national universities tended to foster and preserve that striking originality of mind for which he was always distinguished. Possibly, at the same time, it tended to give to his originality its almost aggressive character.

Browning's regular education closed with the single session of the University of London mentioned above; but though his father, a clerk in the Bank of England, had little money to spare, it was determined to make the promising son an author by pro-

[1] Mrs Sutherland Orr's *Life of Browning*, 53. The curious taste here indicated survived to the close of his life. Just as in his youth he read and digested Johnson, so in his old age he read and digested the portion of Dr Murray's great dictionary which had appeared before his death.

fession. Browning, therefore, belongs, with Milton, to that very small band of Englishmen who have been deliberately dedicated to literature. It was wisely resolved to widen his mind by travel, and in 1833–1834 he visited Russia and Italy. In later days he became intimately acquainted with the latter country, and after his marriage for long years made his home there. His knowledge became extraordinary. *Sordello*, *The Ring and the Book* and numbers of the shorter poems bear witness to his familiarity with Italian history and literature. In preparation for *Sordello*, to the sorrow of his readers, he read all the books bearing upon the period in the British Museum. Rossetti compares his scholarship with that even of Ruskin, much to the disadvantage of the latter: "I found his [Browning's] knowledge of early Italian art beyond that of anyone I ever met—*encyclopædically* beyond that of Ruskin himself[1]." Notwithstanding his irregular education, therefore, Browning is to be ranked among the most learned of English poets; and his learning was woven into the fabric of his work as closely as Milton's own.

Browning's first publication, *Pauline*, appeared in 1833. The young Tennysons had received £10 from the Jacksons of Louth for *Poems by Two Brothers*; but the fact that any printers had been willing to pay any sum whatever for a volume of boyish poems has been a puzzle to the biographers and critics of Tennyson. Browning had no such good fortune: the expenses of publication were defrayed by an aunt. In after years the poet would fain have let *Pauline* sink into oblivion, and it was not until 1868 that, with the fear of piracy before his eyes, he suffered it to be reprinted. Though the poem is immature we must rejoice that the author's wish was balked; for it is thoroughly characteristic of him, and for that reason alone would be worthy of study. It is described as "a fragment of a confession"; and unquestionably the confession is Browning's own. The youthful ideals and ambitions of his mind are here disclosed, and the models upon which he is forming himself are revealed. And in these we find much more than the germs of the mature Browning. All the

[1] *Letters to Allingham*, 160.

essentials of his method are already present,—immense scope, boldness, concentration upon character. As the poet's first favourable reviewer noticed, it is "of the spirit, spiritual[1]"; and this befits the work of one who held, from first to last, that little else besides the incidents in the development of a soul was worth notice. Again, *Pauline* is a monologue, and so far is in the form which Browning in his maturity found specially suitable to his genius. But it is hardly a *dramatic* monologue; and if we compare it with many of the poems in *Men and Women* or in *Dramatic Romances*, we see at a glance how much it loses in vividness from the absence of the dramatic element. From the beginning Browning's poetry is dramatic *in principle*, but it is not yet dramatic in execution; and hence mainly his deep dissatisfaction with his first poem.

Pauline throws a valuable light upon the author's literary genealogy. It was remarked in the opening chapter on poetry that nearly all the rising poets of that time were more or less obviously and deliberately followers of Keats or of Shelley; and there are parts of *Pauline* redolent of the latter. The young poet's enthusiasm for the "sun-treader," as he calls Shelley, is explicitly declared. And it was lasting. Even in later days, merely to have "seen Shelley plain" was to be marked out from others and crowned. But though Browning continued to admire him, all direct evidence of Shelley's influence soon disappears. Even in *Pauline* it is hardly more than superficial. The two poets were essentially unlike, and Browning followed his own original and independent course.

Browning, then, was of the tribe of Shelley; Tennyson, as we have seen, belonged to that of Keats; and this was only one of a multitude of differences which separated the two poets. Never, perhaps, have two great writers of the same age differed more widely. They were as unlike in personal appearance as in their work. Tennyson looked every inch a poet. One observer, perhaps with a touch of malice, likened his head to that of "a dilapidated Jove[2]"; but probably the most vivid thing ever said

[1] W. J. Fox, quoted in Furnivall's *Bibliography of Browning*, 41.

[2] Bayard Taylor, quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism*.

of him was the remark of Sydney Dobell: "If he were pointed out to you as the man who had written the *Iliad*, you would answer, 'I can well believe it[1].'" But if Browning had been pointed out as the author of the *Iliad*, the answer would have been an ejaculation of surprise. He impressed the observer as a capable and successful man of the world, a man distinguished for good sense rather than for imagination. Until he met Browning, Jowett "had no idea that there was a perfectly sensible poet in the world." But the two poets were different in points far more important than outward appearance. While Tennyson at the start sometimes sank to triviality, Browning's designs were always ambitious and daring, even to excess. Browning is uniformly "dramatic in principle"; but there is not much in literature that is less dramatic than Tennyson's early poetry. Browning chisels out his work with the daring strokes of a Michael Angelo; Tennyson cuts with the fineness needed for a cameo. The one depends upon broad effects, the other upon minute beauties.

Pauline passed not wholly without recognition; for, on the evidence of it, Fox in *The Monthly Repository* emphatically pronounced the anonymous author to be a poet. But it was little read and soon forgotten. Many years afterwards Dante Rossetti found it in the British Museum, divined by the style that it was Browning's, and was sufficiently interested to copy it; but only the fame won by later works effectually revived this youthful essay. The poem, however, opened to the author the pages of *The Monthly Repository*, and he contributed a few pieces to that periodical. His next work of importance was *Paracelsus* (1835), in which the complete Browning at once leaps to light. He ascribes his own failure in *Pauline* to the extravagance of the scheme and the impracticability of the scale. In *Paracelsus* the scheme is not less ambitious, yet the poet comes as near complete success as he ever came in any of his larger works. A difference even of two years counts for much between twenty-one and twenty-three; but far more is due to the fact that the method is right. *Paracelsus*, though not a drama, is dramatic. Slender as

[1] Quoted in *The Life of Tennyson*, i. 355, n.

is the skeleton of facts, it is sufficient for the purpose. The soul whose development is traced in *Paracelsus* is in contact with the world; while in *Pauline* it might as well be a disembodied spirit. *Paracelsus* is one of the greatest poems of the nineteenth century. In grandeur of design, in depth of thought and in intellectual and ethical significance, it may bear comparison even with Goethe's *Faust*, with which indeed Horne, in *A New Spirit of the Age*, actually did compare it. If contemporary poetry was deficient in philosophy, the want is here magnificently supplied. *Paracelsus* embodies a coherent and profound theory of life, powerfully and at the same time artistically expressed. Beauty and power, love and knowledge, these, we are taught, are the threads which must be woven together to make the fabric of life complete.

This philosophy of life is expressed in *Paracelsus* in a dramatic form; but notwithstanding the fact that there are four interlocutors, the poem has more affinity with the dramatic monologue, which Browning gradually found to be the best form for him, than it has with the regular drama. Two of the interlocutors, Festus and Michal, merely serve to throw into relief the character and purpose of Paracelsus himself; while the third, Aprile, is his complement, through whom is brought home to him his essential error, acknowledged in the exclamation,

> "Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
> Whom this strange chance unites once more? Part never!
> Till thou, the lover, know; and I, the knower,
> Love—until both are saved."

The character of Paracelsus, as depicted by Browning, is at once thoroughly original, and extraordinarily great. The historical Paracelsus was generally believed to be a mere charlatan; and Browning himself thought, erroneously, that the word bombast was simply the proper name of Paracelsus (Bombast von Hohenheim) adapted to a new use on account of the inflated style of his lectures. Just as Carlyle refused to believe that a charlatan could have done the work of Mahomet, so to Browning it seemed incredible that a mere impostor could have filled so large a place in the mediæval mind, or could have given a start to so much

sound science. An examination of the original documents convinced him that the common view of the man was mistaken, and led to the creation of the character familiar to us from the poem. Whether the true Paracelsus was the charlatan of common belief, or the dauntless seeker after truth and the profound philosopher of Browning's conception, is a question historically important, but unimportant for the appraisement of the poet's work. The estimate of that must depend upon what he has made of his own conception; and, tried by any test, the poem emerges triumphant. It is rich in beauties of imagery and expression; it contains a glorious lyric in "Over the sea our galleys went." But all the beauties of parts are subordinate to the beauty and the profound meaning of the whole. Matthew Arnold complained that the modern poet was apt to forget the whole and to content himself if the parts were fine; and he contrasted with this attitude of mind that of the ancient poet who said that he had finished his poem when he had only planned it. The criticism is just; but in the case of *Paracelsus* the central conception is as clear and as coherent as that of any poem of antiquity.

Paracelsus, the seeker after truth, starts upon his quest with full appreciation of all that he is sacrificing. His friend Festus, who at first doubts this, is afterwards forced to acknowledge it:—

> "The value of repose and love,
> I meant should tempt you, better far than I
> You seem to comprehend; and yet desist
> No whit from projects where repose nor love
> Has part."

But, great as he knows the sacrifice to be, in his own view Paracelsus has no choice. Like other men who have opened up new realms of action, or burst into unknown seas of thought, he believes himself to be but an instrument with no share in the selection of his own lot beyond his "ready answer to the will of God," whose organ he is. There is nevertheless an element of pride and self-will in him, and we are from the first prepared for failure, or for a success hardly less disastrous than failure. He haughtily cuts himself off from his fellows, and sets out to accomplish single-handed what ought to be the achievement of united

humanity. "I never will be served by those I serve," he declares; and Festus lays his finger on the flaw when he points out that the better course would be for the seeker to make failure impossible by raising a rampart of his fellows.

Paracelsus commits two fatal mistakes. Vast as his purpose is, it is in one sense not great enough. He seeks an unbounded satisfaction of the intellect; but even that would be insufficient unless it were accompanied with an equal satisfaction of the heart. In another sense, his ambition is inordinate; for, as has been hinted, the work he seeks to do is the work not of an individual, but of the human race. Bagehot somewhere quotes a great statesman who said that there is someone "Who is greater than Napoleon, wiser than Voltaire,—c'est tout le monde." This is a truth hid from Browning's Paracelsus, and his ignorance of it is one of the great causes of his catastrophe.

The essential error of Paracelsus is revealed in Part II., where the man of science meets the poet, Aprile, and where the one declares that he aspires to know, and the other that he would love infinitely, and be loved. Paracelsus awakens suddenly to the one-sidedness of his own aim: he has sacrificed "love, hope, fear, faith," and these "make humanity." Hence his impassioned appeal to Aprile:—

> "Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
> To love; and, merciful God, forgive us both!
> We wake at length from weary dreams; but both
> Have slept in fairy-land: though dark and drear
> Appears the world before us, we no less
> Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.
> I too have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE—
> Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
> Still thou hast beauty and I power. We wake:
> What penance canst devise for both of us?"

Probably no youth of twenty-three ever wrote a poem greater than *Paracelsus*; probably no other poet ever made so great an advance in two years as Browning did between *Pauline* and *Paracelsus*. Such a rate of progress could not be maintained; and in fact, only once afterwards, in *The Ring and the Book*, did Browning do work which is clearly greater than this youthful

production. At the publication of *Paracelsus* he stood, unknown to himself, at the parting of the ways. He had found the form which best of all suited his genius; but he was hardly aware of the fact himself. His friend and admirer Macready asked the poet to write a play and keep him from going to America[1]; and the request led to the production of *Strafford* (1837). Doubtless Macready's suggestion was only the seed sown in prepared soil. Browning was conscious of the possession of dramatic genius; he had cause to wish for the material rewards of literature; and if he could write a successful play he was likely to gain them in more liberal measure than by any other sort of work. It was natural that the experiment should be tried, and natural too that it should be repeated several times; but it was nevertheless unfortunate that for eight years the bulk of Browning's work took the form of plays. Of the eight numbers of *Bells and Pomegranates* six were plays. Among these is included *Pippa Passes* (1841), which is rather a series of dramatic scenes than a drama; but all the others are in regular form. They include *King Victor and King Charles* (1842), *The Return of the Druses* (1843), *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (1843), *Colombe's Birthday* (1844), and *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy* (1846).

There can be no doubt that Browning possessed in the highest degree some of the elements of dramatic genius, and that in his dramas there is much admirable work. Nowhere out of Shakespeare, and rarely even in Shakespeare, can there be found a scene more intensely dramatic than the tremendous incident of Ottima and Sebald in *Pippa Passes*. The murder of Duncan is not more terrific or more vivid. *Colombe's Birthday* is a thrilling dramatic romance of perennial charm, and it is almost completely free, at least as regards its general meaning and purpose, from the customary difficulty and obscurity of Browning. *A Soul's Tragedy* is a thoroughly dramatic conception, and is equally clear; and of *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* Dickens emphatically declared that no man living, and not many dead, could produce such a work. And yet, notwithstanding all this, most critics are

[1] *Literary Anecdotes of the XIX Century*, i. 524.

agreed that Browning is not at his best in the dramas, and that the energy he devoted, during those eight years, to the writing of plays, would have produced better results if it had been otherwise directed. There is at least no gainsaying the fact that Browning's plays have failed to keep the stage. There have been occasional revivals of *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* and one or two others; but none of them has ever become a stage favourite. Attempts have been made to account for the failure by the badness of the acting; but Macready and Helen Faucit played in *Strafford*; the latter, with Phelps and Mrs Stirling, was on the cast of *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*; and she and Barry Sullivan took the principal parts in *Colombe's Birthday*. Whatever may have been the deficiencies of some of these actors, they were among the best of their day. It is vain to plead that they missed the subtle meaning of Browning's verses, and that if he had been less intellectual and less great they would have succeeded better. No doubt in a sense that is true; but these very players managed to represent Shakespeare in a way which, if not flawless, was at any rate adequate to the demands of the audience.

It is probable that the true reasons for the very modified success of Browning's dramas are to be found partly in the character of his genius, and partly in the age in which he lived. He undoubtedly "possessed in the highest degree *some* of the elements of dramatic genius"; but he did not possess them all. No one since Shakespeare has surpassed him in the power to illuminate some striking phase of character. Ottima and Sebald in *Pippa Passes*, Colombe and Valence in *Colombe's Birthday*, the Moor Luria in the play which bears his name, the surly patriot Chiappino and the Papal legate Ogniben in *A Soul's Tragedy*, are all masterly; and yet not one of the plays has, in kind, not to speak of degree, the sort of masterliness which we find in *Macbeth*, or in *As You Like It*. Ottima and Sebald are, as has been said, equal to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth themselves in the great murder-scene; and if Browning had any complete drama equal to that single scene, he would rank, at least in respect of it, along with the greatest playwright of all time. But, while it would be difficult to overpraise the poetry of *Pippa Passes*, it is not a drama,

but only a collection of dramatic scenes. The dramatic motive comes from without. In each case it is the song of Pippa passing outside, and wholly unconscious of the drama which is being enacted within, that bring the crisis. In *Macbeth* everything—the promptings of the witches, the conception and germination of the guilty purpose in Macbeth's mind, his wife's whetting of it, the tremendous revulsion after the crime and its different effects on the two great characters—is within.

It may be urged that *Pippa Passes* is not a play, and that it should be judged for what it is, not by reference to a standard to which it does not profess to conform. This is true; though on the other hand it might be argued that there is an inherent inferiority in an external device such as Browning employs in *Pippa Passes*, as compared with the natural evolution which we see in Shakespeare's dramas. But the case does not stand alone, and we get a result not dissimilar if we compare *Colombe's Birthday* with *As You Like It*. Each is romantic in the highest degree, and each is about the best of its kind among the authors' works. The significant difference lies in the enormous amount of argumentation in Browning's play, and the complete absence of it from Shakespeare's. In *As You Like It*, the characters live and act, or live and dream, as befits their "golden world," and the conclusion flows with the ease of a placid stream from their actions and their dreams. In *Colombe's Birthday* it is hammered out by reasoning and discussion. A similar characteristic may be noticed in *Luria*. The Moor is an unconscionable time dying, and there is inordinate discussion during the process. In both plays the argument is rhetoric, splendid rhetoric, indeed, but still something different from the Shakespearean method of unfolding a character as a flower unfolds its petals. Again it may be pleaded that Browning's method suits Browning's theme, as Shakespeare's suits his. And again it must be replied that even if it be so the choice of theme is instructive. Shakespeare never selects themes which demand such treatment. The nearest approach is probably in the great speeches in *Julius Caesar*; and even they bear a far smaller proportion to the whole play than that borne by Valence's arguments to the play of *Colombe's Birthday*. The question is, of course, not

merely, nor principally, a question of the number of lines, but far more one of vital connexion.

This method of evolving character and dramatic situations by argument is not a device used once by Browning and abandoned; it is rather his habitual method, and that in which he best succeeds. It is in essence the method of his greatest works after he has abandoned the drama. Pompilia, Caponsacchi, Guido, the heroine of *The Inn Album*, all tell their own story and argue their own cause. It is safe, then, to infer that the method had a close affinity with the genius of Browning. For him it was the right method, and his first and greatest task as an artist was to discover under what conditions it could be best applied. Just this discovery, more than anything else except the fact that his fortune had been so chequered, finally turned him from the drama. For while argumentation is right and natural in the dramatic monologue, there may easily be too much of it in a play.

A second cause which unfitted Browning for the regular drama lay in his style. Many critics have pointed out that whoever the speaker may be, he speaks in the voice of Browning; and the fact is too obvious to require much discussion. No dramatist ever possessed a style less flexible. The simple mill-girl Pippa and the magnificent Ottima use the English language in the same way. Thorold, Luria, Djabal, Valence, all speak Browningese. The defect is a grave one in the drama, and at once shuts out from Browning's range all that variety of minor characters who immensely enrich the plays of Shakespeare. A Browningesque Touchstone, or Aguecheek, or Dogberry, is hardly conceivable. And this perhaps is one reason for the fact that Browning's plays tend so often to become one-character plays. In *Strafford* the title-rôle, in *Luria* the Moorish general, and in *A Soul's Tragedy* Chiappino, absorb all the interest. It is the proverbial predominance of Hamlet repeated in play after play; and the predominance is unmodified by any such masterly presentation of the minor characters as we find in *Hamlet*.

Perhaps it is only another way of expressing the first cause, if we point out, as another reason for Browning's limited success in the drama, the fact that though he is profoundly interested in

character, he cares little for action as such. And yet the drama is essentially the literature of action. In narrative we are told what occurs, in the drama we see the actual occurrence. Shakespeare's mastery of character is so great that he has almost fixed the belief that the first business of the drama is the delineation of human nature; but his own example, carefully considered, shows that in reality action is coordinate and of equal importance. It is in and through action that character, in the Shakespearean drama, reveals itself; for indispensable as are the soliloquies, they are still exceptional. The soliloquy and the "aside" are implied confessions that not everything in character can express itself in action or in dialogue. The Elizabethans refused to impoverish themselves by the exclusion of that which is most inward; but they never wavered in the conviction that the drama is essentially the literature of action. Browning on the other hand prefers to take the action as past. In his plays little happens, though much is said.

But, as has been already hinted, the personal qualities of Browning are probably not the sole explanation of his failure. It is at least remarkable how many highly gifted men of the nineteenth century attempted the drama without success. Coleridge, Scott, Byron and Shelley all wrote plays. Shelley wrote one, *The Cenci*, which, but for the nature of the subject, would have been as successful on the stage as it is in the closet. Byron put some admirable work into *Cain* and *Manfred*; but they are not acting dramas. Few who have studied their writings would deny to Beddoes and Wells genius, and dramatic genius too; but, though they both tried dramatic art, neither of them wrote what would be tolerable on the stage. The explanation assuredly is not that they thought it better not to write for the stage. Beddoes distinctly expressed his conviction that a play was meant to be acted, and ought to be fit for its end; and generally, it may safely be said that no dramatist who could write for the stage was ever content to do less. Later on we have the same tale of failure, relieved by only a few partial and chequered and never first-rate successes. In the classical revivals of Matthew Arnold and Swinburne and Lord de Tabley we have an almost explicit confession of the

writers' incapacity to be practical playwrights. In a word, the poverty of the nineteenth century drama is a commonplace: in the midst of abundant genius there is scarcely any to enrich the stage.

The "blessed word" evolution has been so much misused that it needs some courage to pronounce it once more; and yet probably the simple fact is that the literary evolution of England had gone beyond the dramatic stage. There does seem to be a succession of literary forms, corresponding broadly to the stages of development in the mind. The famous Aristotelian classification of poetry into epic, dramatic and lyric, corresponds to three such stages. The first in its simplest elements demands no more than mere observation and the record of events, whether imaginary or real. The second implies the projection of the mind into another personality; it deals with action, but even in its simplest form it must do so reflectively. In the third the introspective and reflective element is greatly increased, and action has become subordinate. Now, in its highest manifestations, the English poetry of the nineteenth century is lyrical: it is often so in principle, even when it is not in form. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Arnold, Rossetti, Swinburne,—all these are first and foremost lyrists. Even in the case of Browning, though his poetry is always "dramatic in principle," a very great deal of it is also lyrical. But this predominance of the lyric implies a development of feeling and reflection, which must have taken place at the expense of something. In point of fact, it did take place largely at the expense of action. The great mass of nineteenth century poetry is brooding and slow in movement. Scott and Morris are the only great masters of narrative verse; for though Byron could tell a story with great vigour, the true Byron is to be found not in the narrative poems, but in the introspective and reflective *Childe Harold* and in the satirical *Don Juan*.

Thus, in shunning action in his dramas, Browning was not merely revealing an individual trait, but illustrating a tendency of the time. In a sophisticated age "the native hue of resolution" becomes "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," and the balance between the two which the drama demands is destroyed.

Though the dramas are the bulkiest portion of Browning's work in the ten years after *Paracelsus*, they are by no means the whole of it. After *Strafford* came the long, involved and contorted narrative poem *Sordello* (1840), which was a bitter disappointment to many of the poet's warmest admirers, has been a stumblingblock to nearly all since, and remains a ready weapon in the hand of the enemy. There is a well-known story to the effect that Douglas Jerrold, reading it in illness and finding himself utterly unable to understand it, was thrown into panic with the belief that he had lost his reason; and Harriet Martineau in her *Autobiography* relates that for the same cause she thought she must be ill. Attempts have been made to defend the poem, but it is really indefensible. Though many poetic beauties of high quality may be found scattered through its pages, they are scarcely worth the toil of the search, and even students of Browning who have read it once will as a rule content themselves with that experience. The poet at one time intended to re-write it, and by nothing short of that process could he have given it a chance of life. The intention was never carried out: probably he found that to write a new poem would not be more toilsome than to give form to the formless.

The two numbers of *Bells and Pomegranates* which were not filled with dramas were *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845). These contained some of Browning's finest work. *In a Gondola*, *Porphyria's Lover*, *The Lost Leader*, *Home Thoughts from Abroad* and *from the Sea*, *The Flight of the Duchess* and *Night and Morning* form a group of dramatic lyrics and dramatic romances which of themselves would secure for their author an honourable place among poets. But perhaps the gem of the two collections was the magnificent *Saul*; though only the first half was given in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, the second part being added in *Men and Women*. Besides the pieces just named, there appeared in these collections the two spirited narrative poems, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* and *How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, and, most characteristic of all, *The Bishop orders his Tomb at St Praxed's Church*, of which Ruskin wrote: "I know no other piece of

modern English prose or poetry, in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit,—its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin[1]."

One more of these lyrical pieces may be mentioned for the sake of an interesting literary association. *Waring*, as is well known, is Browning's expression of surprise and regret at the sudden disappearance of a friend of whose gifts he held a high opinion. Alfred Domett (1811–1887) had been a student of Cambridge contemporaneously with Tennyson; but, notwithstanding his poetical tastes, he does not appear to have been known to the literary group there. He published a volume of poems in 1833, followed this up with some pieces published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1837, was called to the bar in 1841, and in the following year suddenly left England for New Zealand, where he rose to high office, being Prime Minister in 1862–1863. His political work put a stop for a generation to his poetry; but in 1872 he published a long poem, *Ranolf and Amohia*, founded upon Maori legends and descriptive of the scenery of New Zealand. It was followed by *Flotsam and Jetsam, Rhymes Old and New* (1877). Had Domett devoted his life to poetry he might have made a great name. He had many of the qualities of the poet, an observant eye, a light touch, the power to write melodious verse. He had above all a strong intellect, and his verse always proclaims itself the work of a thoughtful man. Though *Ranolf and Amohia* is Antipodean in subject, it deals in masterly fashion with some of the profoundest and most difficult problems of the modern intellect. But Domett is not at his best in a long piece. *Ranolf and Amohia* is rather a poem of striking passages than a fine whole. And among the short pieces there is not enough of the quality of *A Christmas Hymn* and *The Portrait* and *Hougoumont*, to make his fame safe. True poet as he was, he is most likely to be remembered through Browning. The verses entitled *Hougoumont* may, however, be quoted as evidence of his power:—

[1] *Modern Painters*, IV. xx. § 34.

"The air is sweet and bright and hot,
And loaded fruit-trees lean around;
There black unmoving shadows spot
The twinkling grass, the sunny ground;
No sound of mirth or toil to wrong
The orchard's hush at Hougoumont!

And silver daisies simply deck
With meek bright eyes that orchard-plot;
And therein lurks, an azure speck,
The tiny starred Forget-me-not—
Fond type of hearts that love and long
In lonely faith, at Hougoumont.

At every step the beetles run,
Where none pursue, in vain concealed;
Each mailed coat glistens in the sun,
Where none attack, an idle shield!
And ants unheeded scour and throng
The velvet sward at Hougoumont.

The headlong humble-bee alone
Assaults the old and crumbling wall;
His busy bugle faintly blown,
With many a silent interval;
Unchecked he tries each nook along
The moss-grown walls at Hougoumont.

Aloft the moaning pigeons coo,
One gurgling note unvaried still;
The faltering chimes of Braine-le-Heù
The meads with hollow murmurs fill;
And skylarks shower out all day long
Swift-hurrying bliss o'er Hougoumont.

With transport lulled in dreamy eyes,
June woos you to voluptuous ease;
At every turn love smiling sighs;
Dear Nature does her best to please!
How sweet some loved one's loving song,
Couched in green shade at...*Hougoumont*!

—Oh, God! what are we? Do we then
Form part of this material scene?
Can thirty thousand thinking men
Fall—and but leave the fields more green?
'Tis strange—but Hope, be staunch and strong!
It seems so at *sweet* Hougoumont."

The world did not conceive Browning to have established himself as "decisively" in 1845 as it judged Tennyson to have done in 1842; and possibly there may for a long time be more doubt about his position among poets than about Tennyson's. But when we look back now it seems evident that the man who had written *Paracelsus* and *Pippa Passes* and the *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* must prove a power of the first importance in literature. Force, originality, philosophy even in superabundance, all these he promised to add to the literature of the future; and in large measure he had already added them. Besides all this, his cosmopolitanism must not be forgotten. Here, as in many other points, he contrasts with Tennyson. While the latter is intensely patriotic, the note of nationality is rare in Browning. He is Nelson's to command at any time in prose or rhyme; off Cape Trafalgar he drinks the great Admiral's health deep in British beer; and, viewed in a loftier mood, the same scene gives birth to the noble *Home Thoughts, from the Sea.* But as a rule Browning is cosmopolitan in his championship of liberty as in other things. His mixed blood seems to predestine him for this. There is in fact more of Italy, at least in respect of subject-matter, than of England in his verse. So he himself felt when he adapted to himself the old story of Queen Mary, and said that the word Italy would be found engraved on his heart. Yet notwithstanding the immense part which Italy played in furnishing Browning's mind, it would be a profound mistake to regard his genius as Italian in type. In the substance of his mind he was essentially Teutonic.

It was a good omen for English literature that the two leaders in poetry differed from one another so widely: it could not be a bad omen that while the one was fervidly patriotic, the other was frankly cosmopolitan.

CHAPTER III

THE MINOR POETS: EARLIER PERIOD

THERE is something unpleasant in the phrase, minor poets; and yet it is hardly possible to dispense with the use of it. In the present chapter there will be found included names, such as that of Mrs Browning, to which its application may seem almost insulting; and it may be well therefore to explain at the start that it is merely meant to convey the view that the poets so designated are of lesser rank than Tennyson and Browning. It has been said that English literature is not a republic but a monarchy of letters, and that all its members are the subjects of King Shakespeare. In comparison with him, all others might fairly be described as "minor" writers. Adapting this saying, we have taken Tennyson and Browning to be the joint monarchs of early Victorian song. In the general opinion their reign lasted through the whole length of the period; and as they themselves may be called minor in relation to Shakespeare, so all their contemporaries in verse may be called minor in relation to them.

In spite of the fact that the vogue of poetry had passed, an immense amount of poetical work was executed in the twenty years or so which preceded the turn of the century. Some of it was of kinds long rooted in our literature; some may be said to illustrate the transition between the age which was passing away and that which was coming into being. Other sections of it, again, are marked by the special qualities which we have already

found to be, in one way or another, distinctive of this period; and yet others are prophetic of qualities not up to this point fully revealed.

§ 1. *The Balladists.*

There can be no hesitation in ranking the writers of ballads among those who look to the past rather than to the future; and this not merely, nor even chiefly, because the ballad form is one of the oldest in our literature. A more cogent reason in the present instance is that all the early Victorian writers of ballads are more or less closely akin to Scott, and contentedly accept him as their model. Neither Macaulay, nor Aytoun, nor Motherwell, nor R. S. Hawker would have written such verse as they did if Scott had not revived the Border Ballads, and written splendid specimens of the modern ballad as well.

At the head of this group stands Macaulay by virtue of the *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842), in the preface to which the debt to Scott and to the old ballads is explicitly acknowledged. The *Lays* have, like the rest of Macaulay's works, passed through a period of undue depreciation, and seem now to be read in a fair and just spirit. They were criticised by Matthew Arnold, with a harshness and injustice rare in him, as "pinchbeck." But pinchbeck is something which, superficially, looks better than it is; while the *Lays* pretend to be nothing but just exactly what they are. They are not great poetry: no competent judge ever claimed that they were. They are not even among the best of their kind; for there are heights in such ballads as Scott's *Cadyow Castle* and *Harlaw* and Rossetti's *King's Tragedy*, to which Macaulay could never soar. But his *Lays* are nevertheless extremely spirited verse, altogether admirable for the purpose he had in view, and an excellent example of the historical spirit transfused into verse. For here as always Macaulay is essentially the historian. So he is also in the English ballads, *The Armada* and *The Battle of Naseby*; so he is in the lay of *Ivry*; so in great measure he is in the beautiful verses written after his defeat at Edinburgh; and it is evident that the historical spirit inspires even the finest of all his poems, the *Epitaph on a Jacobite*. This is the true spirit of

the balladist; and Macaulay succeeds in his verse just because he calls into play his own strongest faculties. The popular taste which raised the *Lays* into favour was neither an ignoble nor a mistaken one. They have a fine martial ring, such as is hardly to be found except in Homer or in Scott or in William Morris, they are altogether wholesome in tone, and they are exactly the right thing for the purpose in view.

The influence of the striking success of the *Lays of Ancient Rome* is seen, six years later, in the appearance of the *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* (1848). This was the work of William Edmondstoune Aytoun (1813–1865), the brilliant professor of English literature in the University of Edinburgh. Aytoun, though not a great writer, did several things very well. He was a good critic, an excellent story-teller, and one of the best of parodists. His novel, *Norman Sinclair*, though ill-constructed, has much of the interest of a *quasi*-autobiography, and is enlivened with the humour which seasons the best of his *Blackwood* tales,—for example, the famous *Glenmutchkin Railway*. Contemporaneously with the *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* Aytoun was writing, in conjunction with Mr (now Sir) Theodore Martin, the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*, a collection of humorous pieces, including, with much besides that is good, the admirable *Massacre of the Macpherson*.

In the *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* Aytoun is hardly so successful. Though inspiriting, they are far inferior to the ballads of Scott, on which they are modelled. The verse is highly rhetorical and sometimes inflated. The material is frequently beaten out too thin, and the poetic feeling is less pure and true than it is in the *Lays of Ancient Rome*. Nevertheless, *The Burial March of Dundee*, *Edinburgh after Flodden* and *The Island of the Scots* are all inspired by a fine feeling of chivalry which ought long to preserve them. That beautiful poem *Hermotimus* shows powers of a different and in some respects of a higher order. It is written in the difficult measure of *The Bride of Corinth* by Goethe, of whom Aytoun was one of the earliest admirers, and of whose *Faust* he made a translation which was never published.

As in Aytoun so too in Sir Francis Hastings Doyle (1810–

1888) there is a nobly clear martial and heroic strain, which well beseemed the descendant of a family of soldiers. Doyle's rare gifts and high accomplishments are indicated by the fact that he succeeded Matthew Arnold in the chair of poetry at Oxford, and by the expectations formed of him by his friends, among whom were the most distinguished men of his time, both of Oxford and Cambridge. But Doyle never quite justified those expectations. It is evident that more than most poets he depended upon "inspiration," and while his best pieces are unsurpassed in their kind, the whole bulk of his really good verse is very small. If the subject stirred his blood as in *The Private of the Buffs* and *The Red Thread of Honour* he wrote splendidly. In the *Doncaster St Leger* he is carried away by the rush and excitement of the race, and he makes the reader feel his own enthusiasm. These pieces were evidently written at a white heat, and Doyle has a few others scarcely less admirable; but no other strain of his work is comparable to this.

Another balladist of somewhat earlier date, William Motherwell (1797–1835), may be named for the sake of a few spirited pieces such as *The Cavalier's Song* and *The Trooper's Ditty*, and for the fine Norse poems which helped to keep alive the interest in Scandinavian literature which had been felt since Gray. It would, however, be a mistake to regard Motherwell as in any appreciable degree the means of importing a Scandinavian element into our literature. That was the work of greater men.

Of the ballad sort is likewise much of the verse of Robert Stephen Hawker (1803–1875), a good poet and a very interesting man. Hawker spent forty years of his life in the lonely Cornish parish of Morwenstow, but, in spite of the loneliness, the story of his work there is of thrilling interest. It deserves to be had in remembrance at least as much as even his best verse. He practically Christianised a population previously little better than savages; and his poetry everywhere bears traces of the nature of his work, of the scenery of Cornwall, and of the character of the people among whom he lived, their habits, legends, superstitions, virtues. Shipwrecks, and the giving up of the dead by the sea, were frequent incidents in his experience, and both in prose and

in verse he has depicted them vividly. Many of his best pieces are founded upon such incidents, or upon local legends, by which his mind was deeply impressed. To the former class belong, for instance, *The Figure-head of the Caledonia*, the *Death Song* and the *Burial Hour*; to the latter, *The Death-Race*, *Annot of Benallay* and *The Silent Tower of Bottreau*. As a rule, Hawker's pieces, though full of the ballad spirit, are undisguisedly modern; but he could imitate the tone of antiquity when he chose, and he notes with pardonable pride that his best-known piece, *The Song of the Western Men*, deceived three such good judges as Sir Walter Scott, Macaulay and Dickens.

From the serious ballad to the ballad of humour is an easy transition, and already passing mention has been made of it in connexion with Aytoun. In this domain the most widely popular work was that of Richard Harris Barham (1788–1845). He was by profession a clergyman, and he had been a man of letters as well for many years before he struck the vein by which he won renown. It was in 1837 that the celebrated *Ingoldsby Legends* began to appear in *Bentley's Miscellany*, then edited by Charles Dickens. They had a wonderful vogue, and for more than a generation after Barham's death they were regarded as models of what such pieces ought to be. In some ways they well deserved their reputation. They are exceedingly clever, especially in the matter of rhymes; the stories are skilfully told; the ingenuity of the author seems to be well-nigh inexhaustible; and the best of the legends, such as *The Jackdaw of Rheims* and *A Lay of St Nicholas*, are in their own way almost perfect. And yet we soon come to an end of their merits. There is a hard clank in Barham's verse, and his light is never softened with shade. His humour grows monotonous; only two or three subjects on which to exercise it seem to occur to him, and they are subjects which, when constantly reiterated, leave an unpleasant taste. Of poetry the *Legends* are almost completely destitute, and but for the beautiful "last lines," *As I laye a-Thynkynge*, it might be suspected that Barham had none of the poetic faculty.

There are few things in the study of literature so saddening as to turn over again the leaves of books of verse which have once

enjoyed a reputation for fun and frolic. To borrow Thackeray's simile, it is like the aspect of an expired feast after the heel-taps have been exposed all night to the air. In the pure light of day the relics of gaiety and festivity seem poor and tawdry and nauseous. And so it is with the revelries of literature, especially when they are versified. The best of the *Rejected Addresses* and of the *Bon Gaultier Ballads* still retain their power to please, in most cases because they have caught a gleam from the very poems they mimic; but a considerable part even of these volumes has lost the racy flavour which we must believe it once possessed. Much of the wit of George Colman, of Theodore Hook, of Francis Mahony, of William Maginn and of Douglas Jerrold leaves us cold and indifferent; and some of it even repels. Though they stand comparatively near our own time, their day is irretrievably gone. It was not altogether their fault, for they were masters of their craft; it is rather the almost inevitable consequence of working in that particular *genre*. We see this the more clearly the farther we go back in literature. No race more quick-witted than the Greeks has ever existed; and yet nothing can be more vapid than some of those jests which have been carried down the stream of time—as if Bacon had indeed been right when he compared fame to a river which bears up "things light and swollen, and drowns things weighty and solid." The truth seems to be that literature is like wine, it will not keep unless it has a certain "body"; and wit alone, unstrengthened by other qualities, seldom suffices to give it that body.

Nevertheless it is certain that fun in verse can be made to keep sweet for centuries. Aristophanes is still delightful reading; and there is no lack of flavour in the humorous pieces among *The Canterbury Tales*. But it is to be noticed that these works are humorous even more than they are witty; and it is their rich setting of human nature which makes them permanently valuable. Humour wears well, wit in isolation, it would seem, does not. The pieces which we still care to remember are not strings of puns or sparkling sayings, but pieces richly freighted with association, like the best of the parodies; pieces resting upon some human feeling, however ludicrously presented, as in George

Outram's *Annuity*; or, best of all, pieces in which a touch of pathos softens the humour and the wit, as in Thackeray's *Ballad of Bouillabaisse*. Compare the mere play of wit in the famous *Ass-ass-ination*, from *John Bull*, or in Hood's *Faithless Nellie Gray*, with *Bon Gaultier's* delightful parody, redolent of the old ballads, *The Queen in France*, or with the parodies on Scott and Wordsworth in *Rejected Addresses*, or with Calverley's or J. K. Stephen's parodies, or with that admirable travesty of the *Idylls of the King*, *Sir Tray*; and the superiority of the latter class is at once apparent. Nowhere is it more apparent than in Shirley Brooks's "More luck to honest poverty," because that so well illustrates how the parodist may make his verses the vehicle of wisdom. Burns's song, "A man's a man for a' that," is the very essence of manliness; yet it can be made to do service to mere cant, and Brooks's retort is sound and wise as well as clever:—

"More luck to honest poverty,
It claims respect, and a' that;
But honest wealth's a better thing,
We dare be rich for a' that.

For a' that, and a' that,
And spooney cant, and a' that,
A man may have a ten pun note,
And be a brick for a' that."

§ 2. *Vers de Société.*

The light and elegant verse of society is another of those species which are characteristic of no particular age. It is the symptom of a sophisticated civilisation, and is sure to appear whenever the conditions favourable to it exist. In English literature, however, it has never held a place so prominent as in French; and previous to the nineteenth century Matthew Prior reigned unchallenged, with no rival near the throne. During the nineteenth century several writers have won high distinction for this form of verse. It was a factor in the reputation of Moore, and Moore had influence over nearly all the lighter poets of the earlier part of the century. This influence is conspicuous both in

the wit and in the sentimentality of Thomas Haynes Bayly (1797–1839), whose gift of facile versification won for some of his songs a popularity they have not yet wholly lost. So too the gentle and amiable Laman Blanchard (1804–1845) impressed upon verses of no great distinction his own kindly gaiety and humour. But in the earlier half of the century the best writer of light verse was Winthrop Mackworth Praed (1802–1839), to whose primacy, in the latter part of it, Frederick Locker-Lampson and Mr Austin Dobson have succeeded.

With Praed ought perhaps to be classed a younger man, Richard Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton (1805–1885). Milnes, whose portrait has been etched skilfully, though not without acid, in the Vavasour of *Tancred*, was one of the most interesting figures of his generation. Prominent at once in society, in politics and in literature, he was just a little injured in the latter two by the inability to throw himself resolutely into one kind of work. The "catholic sympathies and eclectic turn of mind" noted by Disraeli in Mr Vavasour led Milnes astray; because, as the same pungent satirist proceeds, the capacity to see something good in everything and everybody "disqualifies a man in some degree for the business of life, which requires for its conduct a certain degree of prejudice." It was this foible which led Carlyle to say to him, "There is only one post fit for you, and that is the office of perpetual president of the Heaven and Hell Amalgamation Society[1]." But the foible was no ignoble one; or rather, it was more the expression of a generous and widely tolerant character than a foible. "I have many friends," said W. E. Forster of Milnes, "who would be kind to me in distress, but only one who would be equally kind to me in disgrace[2]." To the memory of Milnes there clings the fragrance of a thousand generous deeds. It was to him that everybody turned when in

[1] *Life of Lord Houghton*, i. 187.

[2] *ibid.* 44. It was pure kindness of heart, not laxity of principle, that made Milnes lenient to evil-doers, and he could be severe enough on occasion. After the *coup d'état* he broke off friendly relations with Napoleon III, and did not resume them till the Emperor had been stripped of all the ill-gotten gains of that crime.

need. To a rich man the giving of money was easy, but Milnes also gave sympathy and took trouble. He was the untiring and delicately generous benefactor of the hapless poet David Gray, and so many others did he befriend that he was regarded as the natural champion of the struggling man of letters. Carlyle had asked him to get a pension for Tennyson, and when Milnes pleaded that it was not easy to do so—his constituents knew nothing about Tennyson and would believe the pension to be a job—Carlyle burst out, "Richard Milnes, on the Day of Judgment, when the Lord asks you why you did not get that pension for Alfred Tennyson, it will not do to lay the blame on your constituents; it is *you* that will be damned[1]."

When Milnes was still at Cambridge a College friend and warm admirer, Stafford O'Brien, wrote to him words which show an almost uncanny prescience: "I often wonder what will be your future destiny, and I think you are near something very glorious, but you will never reach it. I wish it were in my power to give you all the good I possess, and which you want, for I would willingly pull down my hut to build your palace[2]." These words were fully justified in the sequel. Milnes had splendid gifts, and he was always "near something very glorious," but he never reached it. The cause lay, no doubt, in that eclecticism which was noted by Disraeli,—a fatal facility in the reception of impressions and influences, which usually implies a want of depth in the impressions received. Milnes was attracted by Newmanism, and pleaded eloquently for it in *One Tract More*; but when he went to the East he was equally ready to be charmed by Mahommedanism. In fact, he was so ready to see truth in anything that he was rarely impressed by any one truth with the intensity of conviction necessary to great work. He never put his fortune to the touch, "to win or lose it all." He played upon the surface, wrote gracefully, not powerfully, touched—and adorned—many things, rather than made any one all his own.

Milnes began his poetical career early. One of his best-known pieces, *The Brook-side*, was written in 1830, and the rhythm of it was hammered out to the tramp of a horse's hoofs and the rattle

[1] *Life of Houghton*, i. 296. [2] *ibid.* 85.

of an Irish jaunting-car. He versified his travels in Greece in the *Memorials* (1834) of his tour, while his travels in Egypt and the Levant were similarly commemorated in *Palm Leaves* (1844). In *Poems, Legendary and Historical* (1844), he entered into competition, not very successfully, with Macaulay and Aytoun. There is great similarity between Milnes's *Death of Sarsfield* and Aytoun's *Island of the Scots*; but the former leaves the reader perfectly cold, while the latter impresses him, if not as great poetry, at any rate as stirring chivalrous verse. It would however be unjust to judge Houghton by this. He is best in one of his later poems, the beautiful and pathetic *Strangers Yet.*

"Strangers yet!
After years of life together,
After fair and stormy weather,
After travel in fair lands,
After touch of wedded hands,—
Why thus joined? why ever met,
If they must be strangers yet?

Strangers yet!
After childhood's winning ways,
After care and blame and praise,
Counsel asked and wisdom given,
After mutual prayers to Heaven,
Child and parent scarce regret
When they part—are strangers yet.

Strangers yet!
After strife for common ends,
After title of 'old friends,'
After passions fierce and tender,
After cheerful self-surrender,
Hearts may beat and eyes be met,
And the souls be strangers yet."

Milnes never elsewhere rose so high as this. But that which he did with the most uniform success was the *vers de société*.

Praed resembled Milnes in the fact that he united literature with politics. In that respect he resembled also a greater writer than either of them, Macaulay, between whom and Praed there

are other interesting associations: Praed, who was two years Macaulay's junior at Cambridge, read classics with the elder man; and in Parliament the Radical of the Cambridge Union was looked upon as a bulwark of the constitution against the innovations of his former coach, the Cambridge Tory.

Praed's literary faculty was very early developed, and it was cultivated until it became the ready instrument of every thought which he chose to put into verse. From his boyhood at Eton, till he died, he was continually writing,—first for school magazines, including the famous *Etonian*, of which he was the chief supporter, and afterwards for Knight's *Quarterly Magazine*. But in spite of his brilliancy and of his early success, he seems to have recognised that there was a limit to his powers which he could not pass. He never attained, and it does not appear that he earnestly aimed at, greatness in any serious form of literature. Occasionally the reader of Praed is tempted to regret this. There is austere force in *The Covenanter's Lament*, and *The Red Fisherman* shows imagination of a very rare sort. But probably Praed judged well. Though he died young, his seven-and-thirty years were the years also of Burns, and his circumstances were incomparably more favourable for production than those of the ploughman-poet. Many others have done great work in a space still more brief. The fact therefore that Praed did not write great poems may be taken as evidence that he did not possess the power, though contemporaries like Miss Mitford believed that if he had lived longer he would have won distinction in the higher kinds of poetry. As it is, he is clearly first in his own line, and his niche in the temple of fame is more secure than that of many prouder figures. The author of *Quince* and *The Vicar* and *A Letter of Advice* is safe from oblivion. In work of this kind Praed at his best is nearly perfect; and neither Prior, who reigned before him, nor Locker-Lampson, who came after, can be ranked as his equal. Native gifts and acquired skill unite to give him the primacy. The atmosphere of scholarship and high culture envelops all he wrote. A playful and not too piercing wit, ready but not mordant sarcasm, sympathy genuine but not painfully acute, a mind by habit fanciful rather than imaginative, these are

the qualities the combination of which makes Praed the most perfect writer of society verse in English literature; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that his only rival is Landor, a man who has done things so much greater that we easily forget to regard him in this light at all, but who on rare occasions showed that he could write *vers de société* to perfection. If we take Praed's masterpiece, *The Vicar*, we see at once the secret of his excellence. It is a character-sketch, touched with exquisite lightness and delicacy. Few poems are so witty, but there is more than wit in it. Compare it with anything by Theodore Hook or Barham. Hook was one of the wittiest men who ever lived; but wit was the end as well as the beginning of his verse. Praed, especially in *The Vicar*, has feeling as well as brightness, humour as well as wit, he is a poet, not merely a jester. There is a remarkable resemblance, and also a remarkable difference, between him and Hood. He is a Hood at once weaker and stronger; weaker far as a serious poet, yet more masterly as a writer of light verse. But the point of difference is that in Hood we find side by side, but seldom fused, a comic writer and a sombre, nay, a tragic one; in Praed, grave and gay are habitually combined. Judged by *Mary's Ghost* and *John Trot* and *Tim Turpin*, it would appear that Hood was never serious: *The Song of the Shirt* and *Eugene Aram* and *The Haunted House* would be equally good evidence that he never laughed. The truth is that, except in *Miss Kilmansegg*, Hood is a poet witty rather than humorous; and he is grave, even melancholy, far more than either. But Praed mingled humour with his wit, and there are suggestions of gravity in some of his lightest pieces. Sometimes, it is true, the touch of the one poet is scarcely distinguishable from that of the other. There is a Hood-like tone in Praed's lines about the time of King Richard, when

> "Saracens and liquor ran
> Where'er he set his foot";

and we seem to be reading Hood at his happiest in the lines,

> "And he spurred Sir Guy o'er mount and moor,
> With a long dull journey all before,
> And a short gay squire behind him."

There is still much of Hood in

"Sound was his claret—and his head;
Warm was his double-ale—and feelings:
His partners at the whist-club said
That he was faultless in his dealings."

But we notice even here that the puns are made to serve in the delineation of character; and in some of the stanzas of *Quince* and *The Vicar* the serious poet and the shrewd kindly observer of human nature stand pretty clearly revealed:—

"While decay
Came, like a tranquil moonlight, o'er him,
And found him gouty still, and gay,
With no fair nurse to bless or bore him,
His rugged smile and easy chair,
His dread of matrimonial lectures,
His wig, his stick, his powdered hair,
Were themes for very strange conjectures."

* * * * * *

"And he was kind, and loved to sit
In the low hut or garnished cottage,
And praise the farmer's homely wit,
And share the widow's homelier pottage:
At his approach complaint grew mild;
And when his hand unbarred the shutter,
The clammy lips of fever smiled
The welcome which they could not utter."

§ 3. *The Catholic Poets.*

While poets like Praed might belong to almost any age, the group which has next to be considered could hardly have flourished before the second quarter of the nineteenth century. By reason of the date of his principal work, its leader, Keble, has been classed with the poets of the interregnum; but he and a few others whose interests were primarily religious and largely ecclesiastical form a homogeneous class which may conveniently be denominated Catholic. First and chief among the followers is Keble's great companion of the early days of the Oxford Movement, John Henry Newman. His poetry, though slight, indeed, almost insig-

nificant in bulk, is of high imaginative quality. Unfortunately, Newman never regarded himself as a poet, and almost the whole of his verse is the work of his earlier years. Even *The Dream of Gerontius*, though it was not published till 1865, had been written many years before that date and thrown aside and forgotten, until Newman, rummaging for something to gratify the editor of a magazine, came upon it and sent it as his contribution: in so little esteem was one of the subtlest of modern religious poems held by its author. His own saying that "poetry is the refuge of those who have not the Catholic Church to flee to and repose upon," probably indicates the reason for the scantiness of his production as a poet.

Besides *The Dream of Gerontius*, Newman wrote a number of poems which appeared, mingled with pieces from other pens, in *Lyra Apostolica* (1834). A volume of *Verses on Various Occasions* (1868) consists exclusively of his work, and there the greater part of his poetry is to be found. His most prolific years were the early thirties, before his mind was immersed in the turmoil of the *Tracts* too completely for poetical composition. The period of his voyage in the Mediterranean was especially fruitful; and to it belongs in particular the piece by which he is and will remain best known, the beautiful hymn, "Lead, kindly Light." *The Dream of Gerontius* is by far his longest poem, and, with the possible exception of that most poetical of hymns, it is his best title to the name of poet. It is the vision of a dying soul, beautiful with that severe beauty which always characterised Newman, and fascinating from its austere imagination. The lyrical parts are not wholly satisfactory, but the blank verse is grand in its restraint and strength. Newman had a reach of thought and a boldness of imagination which none of the other Catholic poets could rival. By reason of his greater devotion to the art and the greater quantity of his work, Keble must take rank as a poet above Newman; but Newman had the higher endowment, and if he had chosen, or had found time, he would have left work superior to the best that *The Christian Year* contains.

It is unnecessary to delay long over the other writers of this

group. Without any exception but Newman they show mediocrity of intellect; and their emotional fervour could not alone produce great poetry. One of them, Frederick William Faber (1814–1863) found refuge, in the same year as Newman, in the bosom of the Church of Rome. Both before and after his reception into the Romish communion he was a diligent writer of verse; but subsequently to that event he devoted himself in his verse exclusively to the service of his Church. Wordsworth lamented the change and declared that in it England lost a poet. In spite of this judgment, it is not easy to discover in Faber the qualities which under any circumstances would have entitled him to the name of poet; and he is not likely to be remembered, except with that dubious immortality which clings to the hymn-writer who has secured entrance into popular collections. His verse is commonly weak, and often exaggerated in tone and tainted with sentimentality.

As little or even less can Isaac Williams (1802–1865) claim a place in the ranks of those "sacred bards" who are so far removed from the writers of what passes for religious poetry. While Faber went with Newman, Williams remained with Keble, among those who did not feel the *via media* slipping from under their feet; and after Keble he is usually ranked as a minor poet of the Oxford Movement. But Williams was a weak man, and nothing he has written is likely to survive, or deserves to survive. He was the author of the papers on Reserve in the *Tracts for the Times*. His *Autobiography* is a feeble book, and not altogether a pleasant one. More than any other of Newman's Anglican friends, Williams kept up relations with him after the secession; and the unamiable acerbity of some of the references to Newman which are sprinkled through the *Autobiography* ill befits one who continued to profess friendship.

John Mason Neale (1818–1866), though a Cambridge man, was one of those who came under the influence of the Tractarians while the tracts were still running their course. By virtue of his *History of the Eastern Church* and of two or three other historical works, he claims a minor place among historians; but he is best known as a writer, and especially as a translator, of hymns. A number of his translations from the Greek have been incorporated

from his *Hymns of the Eastern Church* into *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and other widely-used collections. The best are very good; but even here Neale's touch is uncertain, and his choice from among the originals is not discriminating. The volume contains, for example, the beautiful and popular "Art thou weary, art thou languid?" and also the absurd, though likewise popular, "Christian, dost thou see them?"

Of far higher quality was the poetry of R. S. Hawker, whose ballads have been already noticed. *The Quest of the Sangraal*, by virtue of which principally he claims notice here, was published incomplete in 1863, and incomplete it still remained at his death in 1875. But his poetical career had begun and his mind had been formed far earlier. Such changes as occurred in him were the result of lonely communings with his own soul; and naturally enough they came more slowly than they came to others who lived more among their fellows. The nature of his broodings may be conjectured from the fact that within a few hours of his death he was received within the Romish communion. Such a change under such circumstances is suggestive; but it would be unjust to Hawker to lay stress on it. No one can tell how far a dying man is really responsible for his actions. In his full health and vigour this consummation might never have been reached: on the other hand, had he lived in close contact with the world it might have been reached years before. By the cast of his mind and his imagination there was a pre-established harmony between Hawker and the High Church revival, though he disliked those who merely emphasised ritual. He had the Tractarians' ready credulity, their mysticism, their appetite for legends, with more than their power of turning legends into poetry. Such tendencies, combined with his residence in Cornwall, naturally drew Hawker towards the more mystical side of the Arthurian legends; and the result was the *Quest*.

§ 4. *The Philosophic Poets.*

The Catholic poets are important chiefly as premonitory of that which was to come under the reign of the Pre-Raphaelites, and these belong to the later part of the period. With the philosophic movement the case was different; for as soon as Browning appears it has to be taken most seriously into account. It claimed the allegiance of the greatest minds of the age, who naturally drew to themselves followers as time went on. But even from the first the intellectual element in verse fascinated some of the minor writers. Of these we may take as representatives Philip James Bailey (1816–1902) and Richard Henry (or Hengist) Horne (1803–1884).

After Beddoes and Wells there is no one so deeply imbued with the Elizabethan spirit as Horne, whose life as well as his writings brings to mind the great Queen's time; for he seems to have been akin to the sea-dogs and adventurers as well as to the dramatists. No literary man of the nineteenth century lived a fuller life than he. Though of small stature, he was endowed with immense strength, and was proud of the athletic feats which he was still able to perform almost to the close of his life. He was destined for the army, but riotous conduct cut short his career at Sandhurst. He then joined the Mexican navy as a midshipman, and saw service in the war with Spain. After numerous perils, among which were a narrow escape from a shark and another from a still more dangerous enemy, a mutinous ship's crew, Horne returned to England and began a career of letters; but nearly ten years passed before he produced anything of permanent importance. In 1837 appeared *Cosmo de' Medici* and *The Death of Marlowe*, the latter of which has no small share of the fire and strength of Marlowe himself. In 1840 they were followed by another tragedy, *Gregory VII*, and that again three years later by Horne's best known work, *Orion, an Epic Poem in three Books*. In scorn of the public, which had long ceased to buy poetry, but which was buying Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*, the author fixed the price at one farthing. Next came *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844), an interesting collection of essays, in which

Horne collaborated with Elizabeth Barrett and others. *Ballad Romances* (1846) was the only other publication worthy of note before the life of adventure began again. In 1852 the gold fever drew Horne to Australia, where he played many parts and ran many risks. It was at this time that for some obscure reason he dropped his baptismal name of Henry and assumed that of Hengist. He returned to England in 1869; and the rest of his life was filled with miscellaneous literary work, all of it of less importance than that which he had previously done,—unless indeed Horne himself was right in the opinion that the still unpublished poem entitled *Ancient Idols; or, the Fall of the Gods* was the greatest of his writings[1].

Horne was a man who gave the stamp of distinction to all he wrote, and who scorned any aim below the highest. In the drama, he held the highest aim to be representation on the stage, and consequently his tragedies were written with that end in view. At the same time, he was convinced that prostitution of poetry and art was the price to be paid for admission to the English stage; and so he contemplated representation only as the possibility of a distant future. The intensity of Horne's dramas goes far to justify his assertion, quoted from Goethe, that they "were written with his blood." No man who values high thought and is capable of sympathy with deep passion and suffering can read them with indifference. And yet it was not wholly the fault of the stage that Horne's dramas were excluded from it. Their high merit as tragic conceptions is marred by stiffness of movement; along with their elevation of thought goes a certain monotony; and the characters are somewhat crudely delineated. All this is true not only of *Cosmo de' Medici*, but also, though in a less degree, of *The Death of Marlowe* and of *Gregory the Great*. The faults grow again in *Laura Dibalzo* (1880), where there is besides a marked lowering of the dignity of the author's style.

Horne's genius, however, was not essentially dramatic. Occasionally he rose high in the lyric, as in *Genius* (*Gulf of Florida*); and the *Ballad of Delora* is admirable. But by far the most memorable of his works is the epic of *Orion*. Its history shows

[1] *Literary Anecdotes of the XIX Century*, i. 245.

that the readers of the time were not quite so contemptible as Horne thought them. They exhausted three editions at the original price of a farthing, and three more at higher rates, within the year of its publication[1].

Orion is an allegorical epic. Its object, Horne explains, is "to present a type of the struggle of man with himself, *i.e.* the contest between the intellect and the senses"; and this is done under the veil of classical myths. The scheme was well adapted to Horne's type of mind. He worked best on a broad canvas; and in the case of *Orion* he could make the canvas as broad as he pleased. Notwithstanding his life of adventure, his literary strength lay in thought, not in action; and in *Orion* there was no such necessity for movement as there was in the dramas. Though never likely to be widely read, the poem will always command the admiration of those who love great thoughts expressed in sonorous verse; and they will find in it many passages of remarkable power. No one probably would echo the extravagant praise of Poe, who ranked Horne next to Tennyson, and pronounced his *Orion* "superior even to Milton's *Paradise Lost*[2]"; but at least he is a poet of no mean order.

Though Horne was essentially original it is evident that he was under the influence of Keats. No doubt the echo is conscious and intentional in the lines:—

> "Never renew thy vision, passionate lover—
> Heart-rifled maiden—nor the hope pursue
> If once it vanish from thee."

Probably it is so too in:—

> "Oinopion strode about his pillared hall,
> And the dim chequers of its marble floor
> Counted perplexed."

Occasionally something overwrought in the style suggests the kind of error into which a disciple is apt to fall:—

> "Old memories
> Slumbrously hung above the purple line

[1] *Literary Anecdotes of the XIX Century*, i. 240.

[2] *The Poe-Chivers Papers*, edited by G. E. Woodberry, in *The Century Magazine*.

Of distance, to the east, while odorously
Glistened the tear-drops of a new-fallen shower;
And sunset forced its beams through strangling boughs,
Gilding green shadows, till it blazed athwart
The giant-caves, and touched with watery fires
The heavy foot-marks which had plashed the sward
On vacant paths, through foliaged vistas steep,
Where gloom was mellowing to a grand repose."

Bold and ambitious as was Horne in his plans, still bolder was Philip James Bailey, whose *Festus* startled the literary world in 1839. No poet has forgotten more completely the injunction to think about Noah and be brief. Already at twenty-three he gave the world a poem of some nine or ten thousand lines, and by additions gradually made through a long life it grew to about forty thousand. Even *The Ring and the Book* is a pigmy by the side of *Festus*.

In one respect Bailey resembles Milton; for he deliberately trained himself from boyhood for the function of a poet. But there is also a striking difference. At thirty-four, when the Civil War began, Milton was still meditating his great work; while at twenty-three Bailey was confident that he had adequately executed one of the most ambitious poetical schemes ever conceived. It is, the poet tells the reader in the preface to the fiftieth-anniversary edition, "a summary of the world's combined moral and physical conditions, estimated on a theory of spiritual things." Structurally, he goes on to say, the poem resolves itself "not into books, or acts, but into twelve or more groups, celestial, astral, interstellar and terrestrial, solar, planetary and one other, the sphere of the Infernals; that is to say, into so many clusters of sections subordinated into seven classes, finally reducible into three, Heavenly, firmamental, earthly." This vast plan the author carries out in fifty-two "scenes," the poem being a sort of drama in which the principal actors—or interlocutors, for it is rather speech than action—are Lucifer and Festus; while a number of supernatural beings, from the Deity downwards, take part.

Festus is not likely ever again to arouse the interest and to win the praise it once gained. Men were awed by the daring of the poet who could not only conceive and resolve to carry out

such a design, but who in the course of it shrank not from challenging comparison with the greatest of modern poets. The whole structure is suggestive of Goethe, and indeed *Festus* owes not a little to *Faust*. Again, the prominence given to the supernatural turns the thoughts to Milton, though the difference between *Festus* and *Paradise Lost* is very wide. Neither was it possible, within twenty years of the publication of *Cain*, to handle such a subject without bringing Byron to mind. Far from concealing all this, Bailey rather drags it to the front. The very name of *Festus* recalls *Faust*; and as if to invite comparison with one of the sublimest passages of *Paradise Lost*, we have, parallel with Satan's address to the sun, an address by Festus to the same luminary. Here is the opening of it:—

> "Parent of spheres, who filling once all space,
> God bidding, threwest off all cloaking clouds,
> To thee intolerable, of nebulous heat,
> The planetary fires; which, gathered there
> In narrowing circlets, imminent o'er the void,
> Each in one common sky, thou centering all,
> Reign'st o'er, their lord and sire; so hailed by earth
> First of heaven's stars reflective of the light
> And favourite of the sun sole source and end
> All turn to; I too like thyself, a liege
> But spiritual, of God, who gave us both
> To be; but in free obedience me; in law
> Infrangible thee, the law of light; through space
> Darting thy quickening ray from orb to orb,
> Leaping, like thought; behold, I seek thee, Sun!"

The thought in this passage (a favourable specimen of the style and substance of *Festus*) is but a poor counterpoise to the grand harmonies of the Miltonic address, even as the world-philosophy of Bailey seems commonplace beside that of Goethe.

Perhaps about a tenth part of *Festus* is good, and a tenth of that tenth part is really admirable; but what is good is so lost and buried in a superincumbent mass of the mediocre and the worthless, that we are reminded of Gratiano's reasons, and doubt whether the grains of wheat are worth the search through all the

chaff. Bailey is capable of writing noble lines and fine passages. There is grandeur in the opening:—

> "Eternity hath snowed its years upon them;
> And the white winter of their age is come,
> The world and all its worlds, and all shall end."

He has gleams of splendid thought perfectly expressed,—*e.g.*, "I am," says Lucifer, "the shadow which creation casts From God's own light." And again in the *Proem* we read, "Evil and good are God's right hand and left." Occasionally there are longer passages which are equally elevated in thought and right in expression:—

> "Life's more than breath and the quick round of blood,
> It is a great spirit and a busy heart.
> The coward and the small in soul scarce do live.
> One generous feeling, one great thought, one deed
> Of good, ere night would make life longer seem
> Than if each year might number a thousand days[1].
> We live in deeds, not years, in thoughts, not breaths;
> In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
> We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
> Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

But Bailey was incapable of self-criticism, and the changes he made were often lamentably for the worse. For example, the lines after "Evil and good are God's right hand and left," originally ran:—

> "By ministry of evil good is clear,
> And by temptation virtue";

and they served to make the thought clearer and to deepen the effect. In the final version, however, ten dreary and inharmonious lines are interposed between the first of these lines and the second, which again is ruined by expansion into four. It is this unfortunate deficiency in the critical faculty which makes *Festus* so extraordinarily uneven and therefore on the whole so wearisome.

[1] But compare this with

> "One crowded hour of glorious life
> Is worth an age without a name."

Bailey had a very faulty sense of style, and he cannot be said to have possessed an ear at all. His metre is nearly always rough, and not infrequently it is execrable. The style is often vitiated by specimens of the worst sort of eighteenth-century taste. Clumsy phrases, harsh inversions, pauses too numerous and ill placed, wear out the patience of the reader who has any ear for the melodies of Keats and Coleridge. James Smetham in his delightful letters has recorded that *Festus* was the only book he ever flung to the other side of the room; and there are many passages irritating enough to provoke such an explosion of wrath. The adjectives, "tremendous, absurd, raw, loud and fuliginous," which Dr John Brown of the *Horae Subsecivae* hurls at *Festus* are all justified.

Bailey is sometimes spoken of as the "father of the Spasmodic School"; but the criticism which classifies him with Dobell and Alexander Smith is superficial, and he was fully justified in repudiating it. We have seen that Bailey is excessively uneven; and so are the Spasmodic poets. But few poems were ever written less "spasmodically" than *Festus*. It is an exhaustive philosophical treatise in verse; and whatever we may think of the philosophy, we must grant that the work is far too laboriously hammered out to be fairly described as "spasmodic."

§ 5. *The Political Poets.*

In religion, the great movement of the early nineteenth century was the Catholic Reaction; and corresponding to it we find in poetry Keble and Newman. In philosophy, the greatest fact was the attraction to Germany; and we find Bailey challenging comparison with Goethe. So too in politics, the movement to democracy finds its poet in Ebenezer Elliott, and after him several of the minor poets draw their inspiration from the political questions of the time. Associated with the Chartist movement there is a small literature, both in prose and in verse, which is by no means destitute of merit. The best of the poetry is of rather later date; for Robert Brough, E. C. Jones and Gerald Massey all belong to the period after the middle of the century; but

Chartism and the radicalism which led up to it have left their memorial in the interesting autobiographies of Samuel Bamford, William Lovett and Thomas Cooper. Of these the best is that of Bamford, whose style is uncommonly good—simple, lively and pointed. A few imperfections of grammar and the occasional misuse of words betray the imperfect education of the man; but his gift of rapid and interesting narrative, his keen observation, his frankness, and the dash of poetry evinced in such passages as his vivid description of a storm at sea, would have redeemed far worse faults.

Cooper in his *Autobiography* shows considerably less of the literary faculty than Bamford, and he appears to have been a man of altogether less sane and safe judgment than that very acute and sensible radical. He supported the wild scheme for a total cessation of work; but he had the penetration to see that, if carried out, it meant civil war. Cooper, however, was a writer of verse as well as of prose, and has left as a memorial of his literary ambition a lengthy work entitled *The Purgatory of Suicides*. It is a poem in the Spenserian stanza, divided into ten books, and extending to about eight thousand lines. The ambition to write it had been cherished for a considerable time by Cooper, and the leisure to do so came during an imprisonment of two years, from 1843 to 1845, to which he was condemned because of his support of the Chartist movement. *The Purgatory of Suicides* has many faults. The Miltonic inversions and complexity of sentence, imitated by an ill-educated man, produce a deplorable effect. The style, in short, is inartistic and bad, and the tone generally too shrill to be dignified. Cooper had a good deal of self-esteem, which sometimes bears a close resemblance to self-conceit, and sometimes vents itself in abuse of those of whom he disapproves.

Of somewhat greater note in literature is Capell Lofft (1806–1873), a man once the object of extravagant praise and of equally extravagant dread and horror. Part of this may have been hereditary, for his father had been an author, a reformer, and a friend of Godwin. Lofft was the author of a prose work, *Self-Formation* (1837), and of an agrarian epic, *Ernest* (1839). Harriet Martineau in her autobiography refers to the former as "a wonder-

ful book," and to the latter as "a poem of prodigious power, but too seditious for publication." The adjectives "wonderful" and "prodigious" seem considerably too strong for the occasion. Though *Self-Formation* shows in parts marked ability, on the whole it is pretentious and wearisome. The author is always on the strain, and the importance of his work is not at all proportioned to his own and Miss Martineau's conception of it.

Ernest, or Political Regeneration, the Chartist epic in twelve books, was reviewed by Milman in the *Quarterly* in a spirit of the warmest admiration of the poetry and of the greatest horror of the politics. The political opinions expressed in *Ernest* are violent enough. There is to be nationalisation of the land without compensation, except so much as will yield the landlords a bare subsistence; and the people are to rule directly, not through representatives. But opinions as violent have often been expressed with at least as great force as Lofft could command, and without any terrific consequences. At the present time we should hardly deem such a poem "too seditious for publication." But as the Chartist principles have lost their terror, so, it is to be feared, has the poem in which they are enshrined lost its savour. There are beautiful passages and powerful passages in *Ernest*; but there are also passages in which the verse is harsh and tuneless in the extreme. There is, however, force and fervour in the lyrical outburst of Hermann, when by the treachery of his father he is driven into the arms of the revolutionists; and in the rush and energy of this passage there is a resemblance to Ibsen's *Brand*, for the sake of which part of the passage may be quoted:—

"No; I will redeem the shame
Of our vile, dishonoured name:
Now that name throughout the land
Is charactered in felon brand;
Soon it shall be pure and bright,
Written in a sunbeam's light,
Uttered in the thunder's voice—
Hear it and quake, my foes, and ye, my friends, rejoice;
For there shall live a spirit in that name,
Who breathes it forth shall breathe a fiery flame:
Evermore proclaim'd aloud
In the council and the crowd:

Strong to comfort and to save,
To cheer the faint, to steel the brave:
Soul of the battle shout,
Rallying here and scattering there in rout.
But what strange cloud o'erhung my brow,
That I was blind till even now?
I saw it not, yet was it there,
That precious truth so heavenly fair.
All in vain did Love and Hope
Point me to this glorious scope,
Till another counsel came,
Muttered in my ear by shame.
Yes, Honour, unto thee
I bow my knee,
To redeem the foul disgrace
Lowering o'er my name and race:
Thy bidding have I done,
So be the Sire forgotten in the Son!"

Both Cooper and Lofft carried their Chartism into their literary work. Ebenezer Jones (1820–1860) did so in a far less marked degree; and circumstances greatly curtailed his poetic work. So cold was the reception of his *Studies of Sensation and Event* (1843) that he burned the poems he had written and devoted himself to articles in the newspapers on topics which interested the radicals of the time. His volume is dedicated to the spirit of Shelley, not to that of Keats; but, though it is far too crude and immature to resemble either poet closely, there is far more of Keats in it than of Shelley. Jones's struggling painful life, his grinding toil, his "lamentable" domestic relations, all plead for recognition as generous as possible for the work he did in circumstances so untoward. His youth when *Studies of Sensation and Event* appeared is an excuse for many faults; and the manly strength which he showed in other ways makes it probable that had he lived longer, or rather, had he been in a position to use for literature his forty years of life, he would have left a considerable name. He who, toiling from the age of seventeen for twelve hours daily for daily bread, nevertheless had the resolution to devote part of the other twelve hours to the higher life of literature, instead of contenting himself with sleeping through them, was

assuredly no weakling. Some of his pieces, such as the *Song of the Kings of Gold* and the *Song of the Gold Getters*, show how his soul was wrung by the ethics of trade. Some others, in particular *The Face*, deserve high praise as poetry. Yet on the whole the book needs all the excuses that charity can plead and all the praise that indulgence can bestow. For a heavy indictment might be framed against it. The phrase, "studies of sensation," is well chosen; and the sensations are often of a kind best passed over in silence. Many of the pieces are morally unwholesome. The best that can be said of them is that they are the voice of youthful defiance, and that if Jones had been able to write in maturer years his native strength and rectitude of purpose would have led him to a wiser choice of theme. Certainly his life was not that of a decadent; but it is no matter for regret that he was unable to write more poems of this fleshly sort.

§ 6. *The Celtic Revival.*

But the nineteenth century witnessed a deeper sort of political movement than that which manifested itself in Reform Bills and People's Charters. It is emphatically the century of nationalism, and the unification of Italy and the semi-disintegration of Austria-Hungary are among the results; for obviously nationalism may, according to circumstances, either be a force of union or a force of disruption. In Britain this spirit has shown itself in a growing consciousness of self on the part of the different races (partial though the distinction is) of which the United Kingdom is composed. In literature, we know it as the Teutonic theory among historians, and as the Celtic Revival among imaginative writers.

A good deal, perhaps more than enough, has been heard of late years about the Celtic Revival. It has been mainly Irish, though Scottish, Welsh and Manx Celts also have played their part. In its wide diffusion it is of recent date; but before as well as during the period with which we have to deal there were poets of Celtic blood who, by the subjects they chose, or the qualities of imagination they displayed, or in both ways, showed the influence of the race to which they belonged. The Scottish Celt had

through Macpherson's *Ossian* made his voice heard not in England alone but through Europe; and much of the work of Sir Walter Scott tended to his glorification. Macaulay long ago pointed out the extraordinary result of this romantic presentation of the Celtic character and of Celtic history, in that Killiecrankie, a victory of Highlands over Lowlands, has come to be regarded as a national victory; and the poorer and more backward division of the kingdom has been invested with such a glamour and charm of romance that all the sympathies of the Lowland Scot are with those against whom his fathers fought, and who, when they could, drove his fathers' beeves to their mountain fastnesses. Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion* (1838–1849) in part did for the Welsh Celt what *Ossian* had done for the Highlander. But Europe could not be captured a second time; and the very tenacity with which the Welshman has clung to his native language, and his success in cultivating it, have disguised from the English reader the real vigour of the Celtic spirit in the principality. Matthew Arnold was right in pointing to Wales as the true home of the Celtic genius, and in fixing upon Welsh institutions as its most perfect embodiment.

Arnold's essay *On the Study of Celtic Literature* has done more than anything else to render familiar the idea that there is such a thing as the Celtic spirit, that this spirit shows itself markedly in literature, and that it is widely different from the Teutonic spirit. "Certainly," says Arnold, "the Jew—the Jew of ancient times at least,—seemed a thousand degrees nearer than the Celt to us. Puritanism had so assimilated Bible ideas and phraseology; names like Ebenezer, and notions like that of hewing Agag in pieces, came so natural to us, that the sense of affinity between the Teutonic and the Hebrew nature was quite strong; a steady, middle-class Anglo-Saxon much more imagined himself Ehud's cousin than Ossian's." Then the "steady, middle-class Anglo-Saxon" was assured that there was something in his neighbourhood which he did not comprehend and which it was important for him to comprehend, something which in certain respects was of a finer temper than himself. The middle-class Anglo-Saxon is obstinate enough in his own view of things which he rightly or wrongly

believes himself to understand; but he is extremely docile in respect of things which he knows that he does not understand, and among these things is literature. The middle-class Anglo-Saxon has his own tastes. When Arnold wrote he still read and liked Martin Tupper, because the Philistine in Tupper spoke to the Philistine in himself; but when he was assured that it was bad taste to like Tupper, he believed, obeyed and ceased to read.

The Celt on his part was ready enough to take himself seriously. We have had Celtic twilights since then; we have had more than hints that Shakespeare was a Celt—or at least was good enough to be one; we have had demonstrations that nearly everything worthy of the name of poetry in English is due to the Celtic strain. It is the extreme opposite of the Teutonism of the historical school of Freeman; and probably both extremes are about equally exaggerated and misleading. The fundamental fact is that except in a few remote and isolated Welsh or Highland or Irish valleys, all blood in these islands is mixed blood; and the qualities displayed by the race, in literature and in active life, are, by all the laws of heredity, the result of the mixture. It is in the highest degree probable that neither the native Britons nor the Teutonic invaders, if they had remained pure, would have displayed the great qualities of the English race. But when we come to disentangle the elements, and to label this Celtic and that Teutonic, we are on very doubtful ground. It is said that a high idealising spirit and a rich imaginative glow are marks of the Celt. But Turner was the son of a London barber (who however came from Devon), and his mother was a native of Islington. Yet in the whole range of art there are no paintings more distinguished for these qualities than his. In the case of one individual mere birth-place counts for little. But when we observe similar gifts manifested by Spenser, Shakespeare, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, the theory which makes those gifts peculiarly Celtic is surely strained to the breaking. The Celt, again, is said to be gifted with the power of seeing apocalyptic visions which are hid from the Saxon. Blake was a Londoner. Possibly his blood was mixed; but it would be interesting to learn where, among pure Celts, the power is more strikingly developed than it is in him.

More generally, it is asserted that wherever there is mysticism we may suspect the presence of the Celtic spirit. Now, since the revival of romance, mysticism has been extremely widespread, and the claim is therefore a large one. Carlyle, for example, shared it; and the Celtic school would ascribe it to the Celtic blood in his veins. But Carlyle's mysticism was, if not derived from, at least strongly influenced by, the Germans. Where, then, did the Germans get theirs? Was Novalis a Celt? And if all the higher and more ethereal qualities of English poetry are due to the Celtic strain, whence come the more ethereal qualities in the poetry of Goethe, who is surely not wholly mundane? Above all, why is it that German poetry, which is unquestionably Teutonic, is richer in those ethereal qualities than French poetry, which has at least more of the Celtic element than German?

The more extravagant claims of the eulogists of the Celtic spirit are not borne out by the work of those who are specially claimed as Celtic poets. Some of that work is highly poetical, much of it is respectable, but none of it is absolutely first-rate. None of it, for example, is equal to the best of Tennyson, who is as markedly Teutonic as Mangan is Celtic.

Ireland had in the eighteenth century contributed a number of great writers to the national literature, though some of them, like Swift, were rather Irish by the accident of birth than in any deeper sense. But the Irish writers, unlike their Scottish brethren, had usually been absorbed in the greater mass of the English. It was not merely that there was no distinctive language or cultivated dialect to mark them off as Lowland Scotch did: but they seemed also to drop many of their national qualities in writing for an English public. We detect Irish characteristics in the ready and brilliant wit of Sheridan, in the genial humour of Goldsmith and in the fervour and passion of Burke; yet these writers are not strongly national in the sense in which Burns and Scott are so. Still, to a certain degree Ireland and Irish life already enjoyed that citizenship of literature which Scott is said to have conferred on Scotland. The tales of Miss Edgeworth are Irish in every sense of the word. But the brilliant success of the Waverley Novels brought home to men more fully the possibilities opened up by the

delineation of national character; and Charles Lever in his lively stories painted certain types of Irishmen, not indeed with the insight of a Scott, but at least with a great deal of dash and *verve*. He, together with Samuel Lever, William Maginn, Father Prout, Crofton Croker, William Carleton and Gerald Griffin, gave a noticeable Irish flavour to the fiction of the period; and though most of them wrote verse with some degree of success, it is mainly as writers of prose fiction that they must be judged.

What we have to consider here, however, is the Irish element, not in prose, but in verse. It has been the fashion of late to insist much, and not without exaggeration, on this Irish element. A dispassionate review seems to lead to the conclusion, first, that none of the writers is of the highest power; and secondly, that in some cases, notwithstanding Irish birth, Irish characteristics are not very conspicuous. In the early part of last century Thomas Moore was considered a great poet, and probably the *Irish Melodies* would have been named as the best gift of Ireland to England. Now it would seem but a poor compliment to any race to say that Moore's thin tinkle was its characteristic note in poetry. A little later George Darley showed both a higher poetic gift and more true Celtic fervour, though he never won a tithe of Moore's fame. Richard Chenevix Trench (1807–1886), well known as Archbishop of Dublin and as the author of some very bright and interesting books on the study of the English language, was another writer of verse who was of Irish birth. But there is nothing great in Trench's poetry, nor is there much that is specifically Irish. It is the verse of an accomplished man, rather than of one inspired, and the model on which it is framed is supplied by Wordsworth. The most individual and characteristic thing in it is that vein of pensive melancholy which fits the "large melancholy face, full of earnestness and capacity for woe" that Caroline Fox saw. But Tennyson and Arnold—to name only contemporaries—show that this is not an exclusively Celtic gift.

What has been said of Trench may be repeated of Sir Aubrey de Vere, elsewhere noticed as a dramatist. Though Irish by birth he was of English ancestry, and while he always retained a faithful love of his native country, his ideals were essentially English. He

went to English history for the subject of his greatest drama, and in the very un-Irish Wordsworth he found the model for his non-dramatic verse. So too Aubrey de Vere the younger, in spite of his Irish themes, is essentially a Wordsworthian. He belongs moreover, as does also Sir Samuel Ferguson, mainly to the later period. There remains in the early part of the Victorian era only one figure rising above the mass of inferior versifiers, and at the same time displaying in his verse genuinely Irish characteristics. This is James Clarence Mangan (1803–1849), whose harassed life and pathetic death add to the interest of his intrinsically interesting poetry. Mangan lived in poverty and toil: so much is certain, even if we hesitate to accept his own statement that for seven years he laboured as a copyist eighteen hours a day. A few years before the close of his life he found more congenial employment in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. By that time, however, he was a victim of the opium habit; and in spite of his struggles he remained in bondage to it or to alcohol till his death. The circumstances of his life are Mangan's best excuse. A highly-gifted and sensitive man, with the artistic temperament abnormally developed, was under no common temptation to seek such a refuge from his miseries. The result was the usual one. "No purer and more benignant spirit," says his friend, John Mitchel, "ever alighted upon earth; no more abandoned wretch ever found earth a purgatory and a hell. There were...two Mangans: one well known to the Muses, the other to the police; one soared through the empyrean and sought the stars, the other lay too often in the gutters of Peter Street and Bride Street[1]." Such a man was foredoomed to an early death. Mangan died in 1849 in a hospital, whither he had been removed suffering from cholera.

The nationality of the author is written large on the face of Mangan's works. He attached himself to the Young Ireland party and wrote patriotic songs for it. He translated, adapted or imitated the relics of Erse poetry; although till near the close of his life his knowledge of the language appears to have been superficial. His best-known piece, *My Dark Rosaleen*, a love-song

[1] Mr D. J. O'Donoghue, however, remarks in a note that Mitchel here exaggerates, and adds that Mangan's weaknesses were not publicly known.

allegorising the poet's passion for his country, is one of those translations from the Irish, and doubtless its excellence is the greater because of the fervour with which Mangan realised the feeling of the original. The fine *Lament for the Princes of Tyrone and Tyrconnel*, also a translation, draws its inspiration from the same source; and so do some of the best of his original poems, for example, the admirable *Soul and Country*, a piece which has a fire, intensity and concentration not easily to be surpassed. And yet one of Mangan's editors[1] calls attention to the strange fact that "his genius is happier on Saxon than on Celtic ground." For Mangan was among those who felt the influence of German literature; and he translated, or pretended to translate, not only from Erse, but from the Oriental languages, German, Welsh, Danish, Frisian, Swedish, Spanish and Bohemian; and the general level of his German translations is at least as high as that of his versions from the Erse, though perhaps there are two or three pieces in the latter class superior to anything in the former. Nothing however among the Irish poems surpasses, if indeed anything equals, the best of the Oriental section, *The Karamanian Exile* with its daring imagination, its fine swinging rhythm, its skilful use of the proper name and of Mangan's favourite device of repetition.

"I see thee ever in my dreams,
Karaman!
Thy hundred hills, thy thousand streams,
Karaman, O Karaman!
As when thy gold-bright morning gleams,
As when the deepening sunset seams
With lines of light thy hills and streams,
Karaman!
So thou loomest on my dreams,
Karaman!
On all my dreams, my homesick dreams,
Karaman, O Karaman!"

This beautiful poem, ringing in the ears of the American, J. R. Randall, led, on the occasion of the occupation of Baltimore by Northern troops, to his writing the stirring song, *Maryland*,

[1] Miss Guiney.

my Maryland. The repetition of the refrain is a favourite device of Mangan's. Whether it was consciously imitated by Poe from Mangan or by Mangan from Poe, or whether its presence in both is just a coincidence due to kinship of genius, cannot be determined.

It was inevitable that a poet with such a history as Mangan's should be unequal. Much that he has written is of little or no value; a considerable portion even of his *Selected Poems* might well be spared. But at his best he rises high. Under favourable circumstances he would have left a great name in literature; as it is, he is likely to be remembered only by a few pieces which well deserve, and which it may be hoped will receive more frequently in the future than they have received in the past, a place in the anthologies.

§ 7. *The Poetesses.*

One of the features of the nineteenth century is a development both in the quantity and in the quality of the verse written by women which is sufficiently remarkable to call for special notice. In earlier times the verse—and for that matter the prose too—written by women was very scanty, and it was often published furtively. The seventeenth century, it is true, boasted its "matchless Orinda," who made no secret of her productions; but the far more highly-gifted group of Scottish songstresses, Lady Nairne and the authoresses of the two versions of *The Flowers of the Forest*, concealed the fact of their authorship as if it had been a crime. They listened demurely to the singing of their own songs, and to the conjectures of the company as to the authorship of the beautiful words. But sentiment changed with time; and their successors, Elizabeth Browning and Christina Rossetti, women no less sensitive than they, took with just pride their share of literary fame. Edward FitzGerald thought that women in literature were only doing what men could do much better, while they were leaving undone what men could only do worse than they, or else could not do at all. He was certainly so far right that no woman hitherto has written poetry of the highest kind, and that none except Sappho

(whose achievement is vouched for by the judgment of a critical race) is entitled to a place among the giants, while even she can hardly be classed among the gods of song. But nevertheless the work of the Scottish poetesses alone goes far to answer FitzGerald. Though there are grander instruments of poetry than Scottish song, yet in that Burns breathed the music of his soul; and a number of the songs written by women rival the best of his. *Auld Robin Gray*, *The Land o' the Leal*, *The Auld House* and *Caller Herrin'*, are songs which have gained and which will retain as firm a hold on the affections of the Scottish people as *John Anderson* and *Bonnie Doon*.

It was a Scottish songstress too, Joanna Baillie, who, towards the close of the eighteenth century, took the lead among what we may call the professional poetesses. Her plays were extravagantly praised by Scott and by John Wilson; and they have been described, in a phrase which may provoke a smile, as the best ever written by a woman. In truth they are somewhat commonplace productions; but the success and fame won by Miss Baillie, evanescent though they have proved, were among the influences which encouraged women to make literature their profession. She was a pioneer of the poetesses, just as Fanny Burney was a pioneer of the novelists.

Few of Miss Baillie's successors were ambitious enough to follow her footsteps in the attempt to revive the Shakespearean drama, and none of those who did so attained her measure of success. Miss Mitford is remembered as the writer of *Our Village*, not as the authoress of *The Foscari* and of *Julian*. Sarah Flower Adams (1805–1848) will more probably live as a writer of hymns, and especially of the beautiful "Nearer, my God, to Thee," than as the authoress of the drama, *Vivia Perpetua*. Isabella Harwood (1840–1888), who wrote under the pseudonym of Rose Neil, is not likely to be long remembered; but it was she who made the most persistent effort to revive the poetical drama. More noteworthy as a dramatist, and in many other ways, was Fanny Kemble (1809–1893), who, as a grand-niece of the great Mrs Siddons, had a kind of hereditary right to work for the theatre. Herself a distinguished actress, Fanny Kemble is best remem-

bered for her appearances on the stage and her readings, and above all for her chequered and interesting life, which yielded those racy journals and volumes of reminiscences aptly characterised by Sir F. B. Head as "full of cleverness, talent, simple-heartedness, nature and nakedness[1]." Nevertheless, she deserves a place in the history of dramatic literature and of poetry as well. Her *Francis the First*, written when she was seventeen, is not only a marvellous production for a girl of her years, but a good one in itself. Few plays of that period vie with it in sustained interest; and not the least surprising fact about it is that it is faulty rather from superabundance of energy than from poverty or thinness. In her *English Tragedy* there is less advance than might have been expected from her greater maturity when it was written; but it is a common enough experience that the minds of those who show precocious power early lose the capacity of growth. Yet *An English Tragedy* is a very creditable work. The story, though an unpleasant one, is well told. The characters have not perhaps those fine shades which indicate genius for dramatic art, but they are happily conceived and consistently drawn.

Fanny Kemble wrote poems as well as plays, and in successive volumes dated 1844, 1866 and 1883, she poured out her soul in verse. As a poetess she shows considerable accomplishment, and a few of her sonnets in particular are of high quality and finish. Yet the poetry as a whole is a little superficial, and its value would be slight were it not that the vein of naturalness which marks the *Journals* runs through the verse as well.

The marriages of literary women have frequently been unhappy. The three greatest in English literature, Mrs Browning, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot, have indeed been otherwise. But Caroline Sheridan had bitter cause to rue that she ever changed that name for the name of Norton; Fanny Kemble was driven to seek divorce from her American husband, Pierce Butler; and the two poetesses who in the middle period of the nineteenth century were the poetic oracles of the middle class of culture were both unhappy in their domestic lives. One of these, Felicia Dorothea Hemans

[1] *Memoirs of John Murray*, ii. 404.

(1793–1835), is best known by the name which became hers by marriage; the other, Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802–1838), remains known by that which she surrendered on a union still more unhappy than the marriage of Mrs Hemans. Her death from poison at Cape Coast Castle, where her husband was governor, remains to this day unexplained. Her poetry would be hardly worth mentioning but for its former fame. She wrote with something that seemed like energy and spirit, and she was "romantic" as those are who neither share nor can comprehend the spirit of Coleridge and of Keats; but she has left nothing that any human being can now be the richer for remembering.

Wordsworth wrote some well-known verses on the death of Hogg, where, after naming the poet whose death was the occasion of his writing, he calls upon the reader not to sigh for him, but to

> "Mourn rather for that holy Spirit,
> Sweet as the spring, as ocean deep;
> For Her who, ere her summer faded,
> Has sunk into a breathless sleep."

No poet of Wordsworth's calibre would now refer to Mrs Hemans in such terms; no one with any critical faculty would compare her to the ocean for depth. It is on the contrary a rather superficial sentimentality which is the worst fault of her verse. But if she was once extravagantly praised she is now unduly depreciated; and for that reason it is necessary to insist that the vein of her poetry was genuine though somewhat thin. Weak in thought, verbose in style, in her longer pieces deficient in constructive power, she nevertheless had at her best the unmistakable lyrical touch. *The Graves of a Household* is pathetic; in *England's Dead* and *The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers* there mingles with the sentiment a note of heroism. We may condemn the popular taste which was insensible to the weakness and diffuseness of Mrs Hemans's work; but the popular instinct, in fastening upon such pieces as these, was sound.

Among the minor songstresses of the time were three who had a quasi-hereditary right to a place in literature, like that which Fanny Kemble had to a place on the stage; and, like her, they vindicated their right by their performances. The eldest of the three, Sara

Coleridge (1802–1852) shared with her brother Hartley the inheritance of their father's wonderful intellectual and imaginative gifts. Richard Garnett goes so far as to pronounce hers, "after George Eliot's...the most powerful female mind which has as yet addressed itself to English literature[1]." This is a judgment whose soundness can neither be proved nor disproved; but when we remember the two Brontës, it is at least doubtful. There can however be no doubt that Sara Coleridge was a highly gifted woman. She proved that she possessed considerable learning by translating, at the age of twenty, Dobrizhoffer's *Account of the Abipones*; and both learning and acuteness were required for the work of editing her father's literary remains, a task to which she succeeded on the death of her cousin and husband Henry Nelson Coleridge in 1843. She had helped in the work during her husband's lifetime too, and probably it was in part the reason for the fact that her only original contribution to English literature is *Phantasmion* (1837), a fairy tale of mingled prose and verse, the lyrical snatches of which awaken regret that their author wrote so little.

The other two of the trio, Helen Sheridan, afterwards Lady Dufferin (1807–1867), and Caroline Sheridan, afterwards the Hon. Mrs Norton (1808–1877), were grand-daughters of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. These two sisters united in an extraordinary degree the charms of person and of intellect. They and another sister, who became Duchess of Somerset, were known for their beauty as "the three Graces," and their writings sufficiently attest their intellect. Lady Dufferin wrote little in comparison with her younger sister, probably because she had never that need to write which drove the other on. What she did write suggests also that she may have been by nature less energetic than Mrs Norton. Her poems were collected and published in 1894 by her son, the late Marquis of Dufferin; but two or three of them, in particular the *Lament of the Irish Emigrant*, had before attained wide popularity as songs. Her poetic style is purer and less rhetorical than that of her sister; but it has also less rush and energy.

Mrs Norton, who, only a few months before her death, became

[1] *Poets and Poetry of the XIX Century.*

the wife of the learned and accomplished Sir William Stirling-Maxwell, was forced to write systematically and with serious purpose; for she won by her pen the means of life. Under this stimulus she poured out a copious stream both of prose and of verse; but it is possible that, in the long run, her name will be remembered not so much for anything she wrote herself as for the fact that part of her unhappy story forms the ground-work of George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways*. Her novels are of little merit, and her verse is variable. Her longer works are all beaten out rather thin, and the earlier ones especially are tainted with the sentimentality which appealed to the taste of that time. At a later date she turned to those social problems which were then becoming popular. But she is at her best in ballads and occasional poems, where her high spirit and chivalrous feeling tell. *Bingen on the Rhine* is not unworthy of its popularity.

In an article in *The Quarterly Review* for September, 1840, there were grouped together a number of poetesses, including among others Elizabeth Barrett, Mrs Norton and Sara Coleridge. Along with their poems the writer noticed a slim anonymous volume entitled *IX Poems by V*, which he greeted with the emphatic compliment, *βαιὰ μέν, ἀλλὰ ῥόδα*. This praise was echoed a few years afterwards by one of the finest and most sensitive of critics, Dr John Brown. The writer of the poems was Mrs Archer Clive (1801–1873). She gradually added to her small handful of poems, but the whole volume of her verse is very slender. Like so many other female writers, she also essayed prose fiction; and in *Paul Ferroll* (1855) did work which is scarcely surpassed by more than three or four of them. In poetry too she deserved the praises of the reviewers; and, though she has never become popular, she is much superior to not a few of the poets and poetesses whose names are still familiar. There is masculine force and a rare dignity of thought and expression in *The Grave* and in *Heart's Ease* and in *The Queen's Ball*. Possibly there is also something morbid. Mrs Clive is at least habitually gloomy; but then she is never commonplace, and there is always meaning in her gloom. She is said to have been personally the very reverse of her poems: "There is no resisting,"

says Miss Mitford, "the contagious laughter of those dancing eyes." It is the other side of the familiar story of the melancholy clown.

These female writers have been grouped together partly by reason of their sex. The emergence of woman into literature is practically an occurrence of the nineteenth century, and it is sufficiently important to demand special recognition. But besides, it is a fact that all of them, with the possible exception of Mrs Hemans and L. E. Landon, who died early in the period, illustrate the transition. On the one hand they point to the past: as a rule they are more Byronic than the poets. On the other hand, perhaps because of their sex, they show a remarkable sensitiveness to new influences. The only male writer who does so in equal or greater degree is Lytton.

Accomplished as these women were, pleasant as much of their verse and thoughtful as some of it is, the view taken of the work of women in poetry must depend mainly upon the opinion which may be formed with respect to two poetesses of a larger growth, namely, Mrs Browning and Christina Rossetti, the latter of whom belongs to the later part of our period.

The life of Elizabeth Barrett (1806–1861) was uneventful,—"a bird in a cage," she said, "would have as good a story." After the injury to her spine which crippled her at fifteen, for many years she never left her couch, and for the whole of her life she was to the last degree fragile and delicate. Her marriage with Robert Browning in 1846, their settlement at Florence for the sake of Mrs Browning's health, the birth of a son, and her death in 1861, are all there is to record. But the very absence of incident is instructive here. The young poet of *The Battle of Marathon*, which was printed for private circulation before she had left the schoolroom, and of *An Essay on Mind*, which was published in 1826, was precocious. She had read widely for her years, and at the age of eight had acquired some knowledge of Homer in the original. At a later time she read Plato in the original and all the Greek poets, as well as the whole Bible in Hebrew. Her translation of *Prometheus Bound* attests her scholarship. But she was a recluse who saw nobody beyond the domestic

circle, except one or two very intimate friends; and the sole influence in the formation of her mind, outside the family, was that of the blind scholar to whom she owed her knowledge of Greek. A person so situated—a girl too—was not likely to initiate any new movement; she was rather likely to look farther back than most of her contemporaries.

And this is just what Elizabeth Barrett did. One influence upon her, as we should expect, is that of Byron. The volume named from the *Essay on Mind* contained stanzas on his death, and certain other stanzas "occasioned by a passage in Mr Emerson's journal," which related to him. It also contained a poem entitled *The Dream*, which was modelled with a child-like naivety on a greater and more famous *Dream*. But notwithstanding this, there is really nothing of the Byronic spirit here. Far more significant is the title-poem, *An Essay on Mind*, the very name of which is an imitation of Pope. So too, as far as the author's power went, is the treatment; and she long retained Pope's fondness for antitheses, though she had not his skill in framing them. This discipleship serves to remind us of the fact that the controversy as to the merits of Pope, in which Bowles was the protagonist on one side and Byron on the other, was but newly ended, and that there were still here and there a few, like Miss Barrett, secluded by fortune or by inclination, who looked back for their models to the eighteenth century. Another small group of poems appeared in 1833, and then two more important publications, *The Seraphim and other Poems* (1838) and *Poems* (1844). The last-named volume brings us to the point where the influence of Robert Browning begins.

The Seraphim is correctly described by the author as "a dramatic lyric rather than a lyrical drama." The subject, a dialogue between two seraphs hovering over Calvary at the crucifixion, is chosen with more daring than wisdom. The poem, rather more than a thousand lines long, is in a variety of lyrical metres, some of them of an exceedingly trying and difficult kind. It was a sort of work for which Miss Barrett was ill suited, for she was always prone to lapse into faults of rhyme and rhythm, and always apt, even in simple poems, to be lengthy. Such faults are

still present in the more ambitious and far more successful *Drama of Exile*, the first and longest of the poems of 1844. Here there are passages of powerful thought, intense feeling and vivid conception,—and yet in the very opening song of Lucifer, where a glaring fault is least pardonable, we meet with the intolerable rhyme of "strangles" and "angels," and a little further on with its fellow in vileness, "raiment" and "lament." So it is always in Mrs Browning. She is one of the most irregular of writers. Side by side with beautiful poetry we find commonplace thought, verbose diction, inharmonious verse. Such unhappy conjunctions are illustrated even in the shorter poems of those early volumes. In *The Poet's Vow* we have beautiful things like

> "His changing love—with stars above,
> His pride—with graves below,"

and

> "The old eyes searching, dim with life,
> The young ones dim with death."

And along with these we have, again conspicuously placed at the end,

> "Hold it in thy constant ken
> That God's own unity compresses
> (One into one) the human many,
> And that his everlastingness is
> The bond which is not loosed by any."

Most of the characteristics of Mrs Browning are present in those early volumes. Her religious feeling is manifest everywhere, and especially in the very subjects of the two most ambitious poems. Some of the class who consider such a thing as religion too good for use except on Sundays, even thought that this feeling was made too prominent. The romantic spirit inspires *The Romaunt of Margret*, *The Romaunt of the Page*, *The Lay of the Brown Rosary*, *Lady Geraldine's Courtship* and *Bertha in the Lane*. Her deep social sympathies find voice in *The Cry of the Children* and *The Cry of the Human*; and the special emotions of her own art are in *The Poet's Vow*, *A Vision of Poets* and *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*,—the last noteworthy as containing her first published praise of Robert Browning. But perhaps the

most perfect piece those two volumes contained was *Cowper's Grave.*

No student of Mrs Browning, remembering the *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* can doubt that the influence which Browning brought into her life was on the whole good; but probably few who carefully compare her earlier with her later work will question that along with the good there was an element of evil. Mrs Browning never excelled in long compositions of complex structure; but her ambition disposed her from the first to make the attempt, and Browning strengthened the inclination. She was thoroughly feminine; but under the impulse from him she unconsciously adopted a more masculine tone. She imagined herself a thinker; in reality she *felt*, and in the attempt to translate her feeling into thought she fell into numerous mistakes. She is at her best when she gives free play to her emotions, and it is only then that she attains felicity of style. She does so in the pathetic *Cowper's Grave*; she does it sometimes in the uneven but still beautiful *Cry of the Children*; she does it again in *Bertha in the Lane.*

Mrs Browning's first publication after her marriage was the wonderful *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850), her greatest work and her best title to the rank of premier English poetess. They are not only a great but a unique collection of poems. "Good as they are, these sonnets have neither massiveness and subtlety of thought on the one hand, nor melody and charm on the other, sufficient to secure a place beside the greatest poetry. But they are the genuine utterance of a woman's heart, at once humbled and exalted by love; and in this respect they are unique. The woman's passion, from the woman's point of view, has seldom found expression at all in literature, and this particular aspect of it never. Hence, while it would be too much to say that these sonnets are, as pieces of poetry, equal to the sonnets of Wordsworth or of Milton, it is not so unreasonable to question whether their removal would not leave a more irreparable gap in literature."

The sonnet suited Mrs Browning's genius well, for the same reason that it suited Wordsworth's. Her besetting sin was diffuseness, and the sonnet forced upon her concentration and selection. Even her best pieces in freer forms are marred by excessive

length. *The Cry of the Children*, *The Lay of the Brown Rosary* and *The Rhyme of the Duchess May* would all be better if they were shorter. *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*—"a sort of Lord of Burleigh from the other side"—cries aloud for condensation. In the sonnet, with its rigid limit to fourteen lines, there was no choice: concentration was imperative. And hence we have such faultless pieces as *A Soul's Expression*, where there is not a word too much nor a word wrong. As a rule in Mrs Browning's works we have to pardon the faults in consideration of the beauties.

Casa Guidi Windows (1851) followed the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, and this in turn was followed by *Aurora Leigh* (1857). *Poems before Congress* (1860) was the last volume published during Mrs Browning's life; and the posthumous *Last Poems* (1862) gathered up the remaining fragments of her verse.

Two of these volumes, *Casa Guidi Windows* and *Poems before Congress*, are inspired by Italy. Her residence in that country naturally gave her an interest in its condition and prospects, which was deepened by the influence of her husband. But the choice of subject was for Mrs Browning unfortunate. *Casa Guidi Windows* is long and diffuse. The writer speaks disparagingly of Byron as "not the best kind of second" in the grades of poets; but the passages in his poems which were inspired by Italy have a far clearer and more sonorous ring than Mrs Browning's.

The ambitious metrical romance of *Aurora Leigh* suffers, like much of Mrs Browning's poetry besides, from excessive length. He who has read it once shrinks from travelling again through its many flats of commonplace. As a poem which dealt with questions of the day, as the work of one of the most prominent writers of the time, it was read when it was new. But it is one of that class of poems which after times are content to talk about and take as read. Its length saves it from complete oblivion; but that same length hinders it from reaching the heart. And yet there are beautiful oases of poetry in *Aurora Leigh*, lively descriptions, wise maxims, clear-cut phrases, telling sarcasms. Few have dealt more justly and appreciatively than Mrs Browning with English

landscape. Nowhere is its character more tersely expressed than in the simple words,

> "The ground's most gentle dimplement
> (As if God's finger touched but did not press
> In making England)."

She is sensible of what it lacks.

> "All the fields
> Are tied up fast with hedges, nosegay-like;
> The hills are crumpled plains, the plains parterres,
> The trees, round, woolly, ready to be clipped,
> And if you seek for any wilderness
> You find, at best, a park. A nature tamed
> And grown domestic like a barn-door fowl."

But on the other hand the passage which immediately follows corrects the injustice which this, if it stood alone, would do, and proves the writer to have been equally sensible of the extreme beauty of English scenery.

In spite of its frequent flatness probably none of Mrs Browning's longer poems contains so great a proportion of memorable phrases as *Aurora Leigh*. There are striking images and comparisons:—

> "Those hot fire-seeds of creation held
> In Jove's clenched palm before the worlds were sown";
> "Life, struck sharp on death,
> Makes awful lightning";
> "Young
> As Eve with nature's daybreak on her face."

There are paradoxes conveying truth: fathers love "not as wisely, since less foolishly" than mothers. There are pungent and witty sayings:

> "We are of one flesh, after all,
> And need one flannel (with a proper sense
> Of difference in the quality)."

It is worth dwelling upon such lines and phrases in Mrs Browning's case more than in the case of most poets, for they represent that in which she is weakest. She has both fervid emotion and intellectual abundance, but she is deficient in art. She is far too expansive. She will not restrain herself, select or

condense. She was prone to this error from the first; and unfortunately the influence of Browning tended to foster rather than to check it. He too suffers from the same mistake. Most of his long poems are too long. But his intellectual vigour is sufficient, not to make the fault a merit, but to make it comparatively unimportant. It is not so in Mrs Browning's case. Though she is vigorous, she is far less vigorous than her husband; though she is no mere imitator, she has not his unsurpassed originality. Some of Browning's thoughts are to be found nowhere except in him; many more are nowhere else so powerfully expressed. Mrs Browning's were the thoughts of her own time, and people will be increasingly prone to turn from her diffuse expression of them to some more concentrated presentation. Her memory is safe by reason of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, such a beautiful piece of pathos as *A Child's Grave at Florence*, and such a spirited romance as *The Rhyme of the Duchess May*. But her poems will be severely weeded, and her ultimate place will probably be less lofty than that which her contemporaries were disposed to claim for her.

There remains to notice one other female writer who, though best known for her prose, had the capacity to win very high distinction in poetry. Emily Brontë rarely misses the poetic note, and her verse, if sometimes rough, is nearly always inspired. In the little volume of *Poems: by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* (1846), only the pieces by Ellis were, as Charlotte Brontë frankly admitted, worthy of that notice which neither they nor the others received. But, neglected as they were, the poems of Emily Brontë bear the stamp of genius even more unmistakably than *Wuthering Heights*, and the best of them are far more satisfying than it. Emily Brontë has a strength, a reach of thought and an austerity of imagination which lift her very near the level of the greatest of her contemporaries. She has not volume and she sometimes—not always—lacks polish; but nothing else is wanting. Such pieces as "The linnet in the rocky dells," *Often Rebuked*, *Remembrance* and *The Old Stoic* are great poetry. The noble *Last Lines* may be quoted; for they are the best memorial we possess of the dauntless spirit of their author:—

"No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life—that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unalterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thine infinity;
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Charges, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And stars and universes cease to be,
And Thou wert left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou—THOU art Being and Breath,
And what THOU art may never be destroyed."

CHAPTER IV

TENNYSON

THE career of Tennyson has already been traced down to the issue of the two volumes of poetry in 1842. His subsequent life was altogether uneventful; for he devoted himself with unswerving persistence and industry to the art of poetry, and he found no disturbing circumstances to turn him from his task. He lived retired and solitary; but yet it would be a profound mistake to regard him as a mere recluse, pursuing art for art's sake alone, and indifferent to the life of the world around him, of his own nation, or of those among whom his lot was cast. In respect of his own immediate neighbours, he was in later life something of a hermit. He rarely sought their society, and his gruff manner did not encourage familiarity. The very distinction of his air and appearance kept men aloof even while it attracted them. The man who might have written the Iliad was a person too awe-inspiring to be approached without encouragement; and from Tennyson the encouragement did not come. Nevertheless, Tennyson's poems are the work of a man keenly alive to every human interest. In no other poet is the thought of the age more faithfully mirrored; and the poems in dialect are sufficient proof of interest in the humbler aspects and phases of life. It is evident that in youth Tennyson had listened with an acute ear to the speech of the plain men around him, and had observed their manners and character with a penetrating eye. If he did not add much in later years to such stores of knowledge, he at least preserved with a tenacious memory what he had before accumulated.

With respect to the wider concerns of human society, Tennyson's interest never declined, but rather grew almost to the end. He was among the most patriotic of poets, and he lost no opportunity of singing the glories of England, whether for her political stability or for her renown in arms. Every political change, every great national event, was noted by him, and often such events became the theme of his verse. The revolutionary year 1848, the *coup d'état* in France, the rumours of a French invasion, the question of the sufficiency of the fleet, the death of Wellington, the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, have all left their mark on his poetry. But this by no means measures the full range of his interests. Readers of *In Memoriam* know how earnestly the attempt is made to reconcile the science which he had studied so deeply with the religion which many believed to be undermined by it. Readers of *Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After* know how passionately he protested against the merely material interpretation of the universe.

Tennyson ranks high among the learned poets; and one of the most remarkable features of his verse is the union in it of two sorts of learning. He is learned in his own art. Coleridge declared, with respect to the early poems, that Tennyson had "begun to write verse before he well knew what metre was[1]"; but he studied till he became one of the subtlest metrists who have ever handled the English language. He is less enchanting than Coleridge himself or than Keats; but probably no one except Milton has surpassed him in the conscious art of verse-construction. He is learned also in the works of other poets. His verse is full of haunting suggestions of his predecessors in Greek and Latin, Italian and English; so full that if we dwell upon this aspect of his work exclusively we are tempted to deny him the quality of originality. Ample justice has been done to this side of Tennyson's learning; indeed it has been exaggerated, and echoes have been heard and reminiscences suggested in many cases where there is probably no connexion except that which must always bind the thought of one mind to the thought of another. But justice has not been done to the other side; and the full truth is not told about him till it is said

[1] *Table Talk.*

that he studied almost as deeply the thought, the aspirations and the needs of his own day, and applied all the lore of his art to these. It has been objected against the *Idylls of the King* that they are the Arthurian legends expressed in the language and adapted to the sentiment of the nineteenth century; and whether this be a fault or not, the statement is true. When Tennyson goes back to the Middle Ages he usually does so in obedience to a fashion of the time, rather than because his imagination naturally leads him thither; and so little is he at home in those ages that even his imagination does not save him from occasional absurdity. In short, he made it the great end of his art to express the modern spirit, and the delineation of other times only a means to that end. And this is one great reason for his popularity. Every age is primarily interested in itself; and Tennyson had things to say which went home alike to the statesman of his time, to the man of science, to the man who doubted and to the man who believed.

In the traces of this learning we read the real history of Tennyson's life. After he left Cambridge almost its only landmarks are the dates of the publication of his books. Besides these the sole points worth mentioning are his accession to the laureateship in 1850, his marriage in the same year and his elevation to the peerage in 1884. His acceptance of a title was the subject of some criticism; and it is true enough that no peerage could add to the dignity of Alfred Tennyson. Yet public as well as private reasons could be given in favour of the poet's decision. Public honours do encourage service in art as well as in other things; and England has been only too little prone to bestow them. Peerages had been conferred plentifully for political reasons, or on successful brewers for distinction in the art of accumulating money; but the countrymen of Shakespeare and of Milton had never yet bestowed such an honour on any man merely because he happened to be a great man of letters. Macaulay's case is no exception; for he was a politician as well as a historian, and it may be doubted whether he would not have passed unnoticed, like Gibbon, had his parliamentary career been as undistinguished as that of the latter. Tennyson therefore might well have argued that it was good for his countrymen to learn to think that the

highest honours ought to be bestowed on the highest talents and services, in whatever field they might be displayed. Whether he did argue so or not, his acceptance of the peerage was itself of the nature of a public service.

The modern spirit grew stronger in Tennyson as the years passed. Much of the early verse might belong to any age, and some of it really breathes the spirit of the past: there is more of mediævalism in *The Lady of Shalott* than in all the *Idylls of the King*. But after 1842 this is rare: Tennyson is the poet of his own time. The change is manifest in *The Princess* (1847). This is the first long poem its author had produced, and though it ranks low among his works, in several respects it is worthy of attention. It is in a tone between jest and earnest of which the examples are rare; it is an attempt to deal in verse with a great modern problem; and it affords the earliest evidence of that deficiency in power of construction which mars all Tennyson's more ambitious poems.

The questions of the proper position of women in society, the functions they might legitimately and usefully endeavour to discharge in addition to those of the family which obviously fall to them, and the education which would fit them for those functions, were just beginning to be agitated in England. They are the offspring of that democratic development which had won its earliest triumphs a few years before; and they received point from that utilitarian doctrine which taught that in striking the balance between good and evil everybody was to count for one, and no more and no less. If this were the proper principle, it was pretty obvious that hitherto half the human race had counted for considerably less, and consequently that here there was crying need of reform. Naturally therefore many of the earliest champions of women were found among the Utilitarians; and though Mill's *Subjection of Women* belongs to a later date, the principles it embodies had been taught long before. Comte's exaltation of the feminine element in the universe tended in the same direction. So did that revived mediævalism to which Tennyson in this very poem proved himself unfaithful. So did the religious movement which was one of the forms of mediævalism. The "saints"

of Puritanism were of the masculine gender, and their hand was often on the sword; but many of the saints of Anglo-Catholicism were feminine, and far more were effeminate. The position assigned to the Virgin Mary necessarily reacted on her sex. Burke's celebrated lament for the decay of chivalry came, oddly enough, just at the time when that chivalry was starting into a renewed, and, as it seemed, a vigorous life. If we look back at either the poetry or the prose fiction of the eighteenth century, before it was touched with romance, we see little or no chivalry in the relations of the sexes. It does not exist in the verse of Dryden or of Pope. The episode of Musidora in Thomson's *Seasons*, once much admired, seems to the modern mind coarse and false in taste. Still less do we find chivalry towards women in Fielding or Smollett. But the moment romance revives it comes again. The Celtic strain of *Ossian* did something to bring it back. We find it in the love-songs of Burns. It would be superfluous to point to the evidences of it in Shelley and Keats and Scott and their contemporaries in England and on the Continent. The lay of the lady-love was evidently inseparable from lays of war and knightly worth.

There had however always been an element of unreality in that knightly worship of womanhood. Cervantes had ridiculed it in his Dulcinea del Toboso; and the most romantically inclined could not wholly blind themselves to the sordid facts which marred the picturesqueness of the Middle Ages. When, therefore, it came to applying the lessons of the past to the present, and translating these romantic imaginations into fact (for the most ethereal imaginations do influence facts), men, and still more women themselves, were struck with the glaring incongruity between the dream and the reality. The woman of romance was a queen of love and beauty, and the knight of romance was a being whose principal business was to worship her and to right her wrongs. The man of reality led a much more mundane and prosaic existence. The woman of reality was a being of no political power, and of very little real power of any sort. Her education was narrow: it consisted chiefly of "accomplishments." She could embroider, paint a little, and play commonplace music

in a manner worthy of the music. She was barred from the professions; if she married, her own property passed out of her hands; if she did anything outside her own home, she ran the risk of being criticised as "unsexed"; and hence, as we have seen, the earliest female writers carefully concealed the sins of their pen. In short, a woman had the high privilege to "suckle fools and chronicle small beer." It was neither possible nor desirable that one half of the human race should be queens of love and beauty and the other half their servants; but it might be both possible and desirable to attain to something less like the reverse of all this than the actual condition of things.

Considerations of this sort were confusedly fermenting in the minds of men about the middle of the nineteenth century, and Tennyson in *The Princess* gives voice to some of them. For him it was a great change. The delicately-fanciful portraits of maidens in the early poems are all touched with romance of a somewhat dilettante sort. The very names, Claribel, Mariana, Oriana, Madeline, Rosalind, Fatima, are redolent of romance. But these "airy fairy," "ever varying," "faintly smiling" or "rare pale" damsels are all shadowy and unreal; they are not "for human nature's daily food"; they themselves have not been nourished on such food, they have fed on honey-dew and drunk the milk of Paradise. They would not stand the wear and tear of life. The only thing possible is to set them apart, like china ornaments on a bracket or in a cupboard.

The type of woman for and by whom "the woman question" was raised was far different. In *The Princess* Tennyson partly sees this. But the great defect of the poem is that it is in every respect half-hearted. Bunyan's Mr Facing-both-ways was not more divided in mind as to his choice of the road to heaven or the road to hell than is Tennyson in *The Princess*. This is the reason why it is "a medley": no close-knit plan was possible until the poet had cleared his own mind, and when he wrote he had not done so. To the same cause is due the hybrid mixture of the modern idea and the mediæval story. This too is the reason why the poem hovers midway between jest and earnest. The author has not quite made up his mind about anything. He never gets clear

away from the atmosphere of the picnic, he never knows how to regard his own "sweet girl-graduates." The conventional ending of love and marriage seems to hint that after all there is not much in this "woman question," that the one great profession for women is that which always has been and always must be open to them —matrimony. This doubtless is true, but it is not very illuminative: it throws no light upon the path of that considerable minority for whom the profession in question is *not* open. Still, the doctrine of the close is good sense admirably versified. It is a little difficult, perhaps, to do it full justice, for the thoughts are well within the range of much smaller minds than Tennyson's. They are so now; but they were so in a much less degree then. "'Tis sixty years since"; and Tennyson's recognition of the woman's sphere was then unusually liberal. It seems all the more creditable to him when we bear in mind the predilections apparent in the portraits of those fancy-maidens of the early poems. And we become conscious of the distance traversed when we compare the Tennysonian ideal with the Miltonic.

The Princess is an exception among the poems subsequent to 1842 in respect of the alterations it has undergone. These have been great, and perhaps we may infer that Tennyson himself was not quite satisfied with his production. The most noticeable change was the insertion of the beautiful lyrics which stand now between the parts. The highest grace of *The Princess* was absent from the version of 1847: the songs were added in 1850, and some of them are worthy to rank among the best even Tennyson, always a master of the lyric, ever wrote. Apart from the songs, *The Princess* contained nothing calculated to add to the reputation won by the volumes of 1842. The problems of construction presented by a lengthy work had been rather shirked than solved.

Three years later the disappointment faded from the minds of nearly all admirers of Tennyson. Milton calls a good book "the precious life-blood of a master spirit," and to few books is the phrase more applicable than to *In Memoriam* (1850). It is the result of the long brooding of seventeen years. The history of its composition is known only in outline; but from that outline, from

what is known of Tennyson's method in general, and from the internal evidence of style and substance, the gaps can be filled with considerable confidence. Besides the sections of *In Memoriam* which are known to have been composed shortly after the death of Arthur Hallam, many others, whether written or not, must have been meditated and shaped in the poet's "study of imagination." At Christmas, 1841, Edmund Lushington (Dean of Westminster) found that "the memorial poems had largely increased[1]" since he had seen the poet. Even outside *In Memoriam*, some of the profoundest of his work in those years is known to have been the product of the feelings which inspired the great elegy *Ulysses*. In short, the subject had full possession of him, and *In Memoriam* may be taken to be the best that Tennyson's head and heart could frame in the long labour of seventeen years,—years which found him in the prime of youthful manhood and left him on the verge of middle age.

Many readers approach *In Memoriam* with a certain degree of scepticism as to the reality of the feeling expressed by it. "All this about a friend dead seventeen years?" they ask. A little examination shows that they are not required to understand it thus. *In Memoriam* is a poetic philosophy of life and death, as well as an elegy on Arthur Hallam. Only so can a poem of nearly three thousand lines on such a subject be justified; and even so the faults of *In Memoriam* are first, the monotony due to long dwelling upon thoughts, profound indeed and of universal and vital importance, but still all in one key; and secondly, the sense of something not altogether wholesome in this long brooding over the grave; for all the light which Tennyson imparts does not avail to dispel the gloom. After all, and in spite of generations of preachers, the business of life is living, not dying; and there is a fallacy in all attempts to convince men that eternity is infinitely more important than time. At least time is the way to eternity; and it has never been shown that there can be any preparation for it better than doing what our hand finds to do here and now. Though Tennyson does not teach the preachers' doctrine, he moves in this sphere of thought, and the long lingering in it tends

[1] *Life of Tennyson*, i. 202.

to sap the will and to weaken the springs of action. In one way its length and its complexity lift *In Memoriam* above all other English elegies; in another they place it at a disadvantage with those of Milton and Shelley. *Adonais* is like a trumpet-call to action; and the reader of *Lycidas* rises from it ready to grasp the "two-handed engine" and smite; though he may be doubtful what the engine is, and what is to be smitten. It is not so with *In Memoriam*. The difference may be partly explained by the character of the personal relation between the authors and the subjects of the three elegies; for the connexion between Shelley and Keats, or between Milton and Edward King, was slight in comparison with the love of Tennyson for Hallam. Perhaps it is partly due also to the influence of the time: at any rate Arnold's *Thyrsis* tends to the same paralysis of action, though its shortness makes the effect comparatively slight.

Less than half of *In Memoriam* bears direct reference to the sorrow of Alfred Tennyson for his dead friend; and the portion is ample for every tone of grief, from the first crushed feeling when the blow falls to the calm regret when years have passed and reflection has done its work and the manifold interests and duties of life have made their claim. The rest of the poem (with many of the sections referring more directly to Hallam) contains that poetic philosophy to which reference has been made. It is a wide one; for *In Memoriam* is Tennyson's best title to the rank of a thinker in verse,—a lofty rank, when the thinker does not lower the melody or the poetic charm of his verse, as Tennyson has certainly not done in this poem. Science, religion, patriotism, all find their place here. Most of all the poems of Tennyson, *In Memoriam* is "saturated" with astronomy. The teaching of geology has gone home to the writer, and the sound of streams suggests to his mind how they

> "Draw down Æonian hills, and sow
> The dust of continents to be."

He has glimmerings of evolution before the birth of evolution: a proof how well he "understood the drift of science"; for the embryo is contained in Lyell's *Principles of Geology*.

The religious element in *In Memoriam* is all-pervading. The true theme of the poem is the group of problems which are the soul of all religion. Any death inevitably suggests those problems: the death of Hallam—the brilliant mind blighted before it was fully opened, the promising career cut short ere it was well begun —forced them upon Tennyson. All his study of nature is ancillary to this. The sense of mystery awes him. Life seems to him, as it did to Carlyle, a moment between two eternities: man is "an infant crying in the night." There is no solution of the problem, no creed that makes all things clear. We only trust that "*somehow* good will be the final goal of ill." This attitude of mind was one of the causes of the popularity of the poem. *In Memoriam* contained something that appealed to all; to the man of science, who was pleased to find himself understood; to the man oppressed with doubts, who found many of his own difficulties powerfully and beautifully expressed by the poet; and to the orthodox believer, who was gratified by the final victory of faith. It may be questioned whether the victory was quite legitimately won. The heart standing up like a man in wrath suggests Alexander's masterful way of dealing with the Gordian knot. Some of the sceptical arguments are not pressed home, and the reader is reminded of Don Quixote's treatment of his helmet. With the first stroke by which he meant to test its strength he damaged it sorely; so after he had repaired it he refrained from testing it again. It was doubt which made Don Quixote cautious, and perhaps doubt made Tennyson cautious too. Hence the suggestion, surprising enough to the superficial reader, that "*In Memoriam* may almost be said to be the poem of nineteenth century scepticism[1]."

In his final standpoint Tennyson contrasts with Browning. His is the attitude of faith, just because it is also that of doubt: he does not *see* how good can be the goal of ill, but he trusts. Even Browning is not always faithful to knowledge, but in essence his is the attitude of philosophy: he faces the difficulty and reasons it out. "Is evil a result less necessary than good?" he asks, and he brings both good and evil into reasoned connexion

[1] Hiram Corson, quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism*.

with the scheme of the universe. Much may be learnt as to the difference between the two poets by comparing *La Saisiaz* with *In Memoriam*. The former, inferior as a poem, is a far weightier piece of reasoning.

On its artistic side, *In Memoriam* is full of interest. It is one of the metrical triumphs of the language. The stanza is not Tennyson's invention, for Ben Jonson had used it, and so had Lord Herbert of Cherbury. But if Tennyson did not invent the measure, he unquestionably made it his own. "Property to whom proper," says Ruskin; and so masterly is the skill with which this peculiar quatrain is used that we may consider the title established. It is now one of the classical stanzas of the English language, and till Tennyson showed what could be made of it, to all intents and purposes it was unknown. Not a little of the effect is due to the admirable adaptation of the metre to the subject. The slow movement of the verse suits the brooding thought as perfectly as even Spenser's stanza suited him.

In Memoriam is also one of the most learned of English poems, not only in the sense already indicated, but by reason of the wealth of literary allusion embodied in it. This does not mean borrowing, still less stealing; but during those seventeen years Tennyson studied hard and read widely, and all this study and reading blends in his verse. As the air of a garden full of flowers is loaded with all their mingled scents, so is the verse of *In Memoriam* fraught with reminiscences, indicated by a word, a turn of phrase, a point of view, from numberless poets and from not a few prose-writers whom the poet had studied. The rich and high-wrought style, the extraordinary felicities of expression, are among the results of this poetic learning. Few poems contain more "jewels five words long"; no other poem of recent times has given so many familiar quotations to the language. And on the whole the taste which selects and passes current these quotations is remarkably sure: their number is no bad test of merit. On the other hand, it must be confessed that Tennyson does not always escape the faults which usually accompany such a style. It is sometimes not merely high-wrought but over-wrought; the expression is too weighty for the thought, or the words are tortured.

Thus, "eaves of wearied eyes" is an affected expression, and "mother town" for metropolis is hardly English.

The great elegy is no less noticeable than *The Princess* in respect of its construction; for once more a long poem leaves unsettled the question whether Tennyson had or had not the power of creating a great artistic whole. Such a whole *In Memoriam* is not. It has a unity of its own, sufficient for the purpose, and the poet is in no way to blame because it has no more. Still, the fact remains that it has not a unity like that of a great epic such as the *Aeneid* or *Paradise Lost*, or a great tragedy such as *Antigone* or *Othello*. It has only the unity which belongs to a series of moods of one person, and is therefore comparable rather to that which binds together the sonnets of Shakespeare, or better, those of Petrarch to Laura, from the scheme of which Tennyson borrowed hints. The separate sections are, like the sonnets, independent poems as well as parts of one great poem; and it would be affectation to pretend that none could be omitted without leaving an appreciable gap.

The election of Tennyson to the throne left vacant by the death of Wordsworth was natural after *In Memoriam*. As we look back, he seems to tower, *latis humeris et toto vertice*, above all his contemporaries except Browning; and although Browning had been warmly praised by critics, one at least of whom in 1845 had claimed for him pre-eminence among the poets of the day, he had never been popular. The laureateship was, in point of fact, first gracefully offered to, and as gracefully declined by, the aged Samuel Rogers; but apart from the compliment to such a veteran of letters, there was a difference of opinion as to the proper recipient of the honour which seems surprising now. The appointment of Tennyson was, however, generally welcomed; and the choice proved to be a happy one, not only because of the eminence of the poet, but because few if any have ever excelled him in the art of turning those complimentary verses on ceremonial occasions which it falls to the laureate officially or *quasi*-officially to celebrate.

The death of Wellington, occurring not long after Tennyson's appointment to the laureateship, gave him a splendid opportunity

for the *quasi*-official exercise of his function. The great *Ode*, however, was received with a coldness at which we can only wonder now. Three years later came *Maud* (1855). Of all his longer works, except *The Princess*, this lyrical monodrama is the least satisfactory. Nowhere do we find more splendid fragments of poetry; but *Maud* too is loosely compacted. The thread of connexion is the character of the hero, whose mind, in an unwholesome state from the start, is followed through passion, exaltation and disaster to madness. In respect of the general scheme, therefore, there is some resemblance to *In Memoriam*. Both poems are studies of a soul. But in *In Memoriam* the soul is the poet's own and the method is the method of reflection, while in *Maud* the method is dramatic. Tennyson had already made tentative advances towards the dramatic method, for *The May Queen* and *Locksley Hall* are dramatic lyrics. These poems had attained a popularity somewhat beyond their deserts; they were perhaps the best known of all their author's writings; but they were by no means the finest poetry he had produced. *The May Queen* borders upon the namby-pamby, and the hero of *Locksley Hall* is unworthy of the splendid verse. The same mistake is repeated in *Maud*. The picture of reason overthrown may be made impressive, but there ought to be grandeur in the reason before its overthrow. There is no grandeur in the peevish, querulous, scolding hero of *Maud*; and therefore, even if the scenes of madness had been skilfully managed, they would have failed to produce their proper effect.

When we descend from the whole to the parts the verdict must be very different; for among those parts are some of the loveliest lyrics, including the most splendid Tennyson ever wrote, "Come into the garden, Maud," and another, "O that 'twere possible," which for exquisite pathos is only rivalled by "Break, break, break." It is in these lyric fragments that the merit of *Maud* lies, and probably the work it embodies would have helped his fame more if he had never attempted to bind the pieces together.

Nevertheless the attempt to build up the fragments into a whole is significant, and so are the contents of many of the parts.

The poet, though a lyrist, will not rest in the emotion of the moment. The purpose, the didactic element, traceable, sometimes to its detriment, in nearly all his work after the death of Hallam, is prominent here. Science has left its mark, and the evolutionary tendencies of the poet are unmistakable:—

> "A monstrous eft was of old the Lord and Master of Earth,
> For him did the high sun flame, and the river billowing ran,
> And he felt himself in his force to be Nature's crowning race.
> As nine months go to the shaping an infant ripe for his birth,
> So many a million of ages have gone to the making of man:
> He now is first, but is he the last? is he not too base?"

The state of society has left its mark too, and the poet is awake to the evils which stirred the spirits of Carlyle and Kingsley and Mill. The "Mammonite mother" killing "her babe for a burial fee," the poor "hovell'd and hustled together, each sex, like swine," the society in which "only the ledger lives, and only not all men lie,"—we hear of similar things to these long afterwards in some of Tennyson's most powerful poems. He was still only learning how to use such material. The poet's defence of war has been loudly condemned; but it is to be remembered that it is a defence of war conceived as bringing to an end not the peace of the golden age, but peace based on lies and fraud and oppression, and substituting for the self-seeking of the trading Thickster that which at any rate unites the nation in a common pursuit of a single end not meanly selfish.

Hitherto the great bulk of Tennyson's work had been lyrical. *The Princess* is the only exception on a large scale. *Maud* is a bundle of lyrics, and *In Memoriam* is lyrical throughout both in structure and in principle. So are the majority of the poems in the earlier volumes. The principal exceptions are the *English Idylls* which form a group remarkable in themselves and influential upon subsequent poetry.

Poems dealing with rural subjects have held a place in literary tradition from the time of Theocritus. Spenser made the fashion English. But the pastoral of literature was a highly conventional form of composition, and the shepherds and shepherdesses were creatures of an Arcadia where their business was to "fleet the time

carelessly, as they did in the golden world." Allan Ramsay transferred them to Scotland, and, though he still retained many conventions, he made the figures of his pastoral real Scottish shepherd lads and lasses. Ramsay, however, presented them dramatically; and it was not until the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries that the narrative of rural life as it is in reality was rooted in English verse by Southey and Wordsworth. It was in their footsteps that Tennyson followed; but he made a deviation too, and after his fashion introduced a new convention, so that, of the group of poems called *English Idylls* there is only one, the tale of *Dora*, which can be considered simply a tale of rural life, and that closely follows Miss Mitford's *Tale of Dora Creswell*[1]. The artists of *The Gardener's Daughter*, and Edwin Morris, who knows "long names of agaric, moss and fern," and who forges "a thousand theories of the rocks," and Letty, who looks "like Proserpine in Enna gathering flowers," are beings from another world.

The truth is that Tennyson, especially in his earlier years, was eminently a poet of the study. His habitual diction was ornate, sometimes it was artificial, contorted, almost fantastic. He could write with great simplicity when he chose, as the idyll of *Dora* shows; but even there the flavour of the verse is not that of the upturned clod, but of the library. Burns holds the plough himself, and with his own hand "turns the weeder-clips aside" to spare the symbol of his country. He finds poetry in his own life: he has his vision of the muse who wreathes his brow with holly,—but it is in an "auld clay biggin" the smoke of which irritates the reader's throat and nostrils. His jolly beggars sing jolly songs; but their rags are of the raggedest. We are a long way from this sort of reality in Tennyson. We have escaped from Arcadia only to get into the land of a new convention, whose latitude and longitude have not yet been taken. But for his *Northern Farmer* and *Northern Cobbler* and a few other pieces of the same kind, all of them the product of later years, his ability to get into closer contact with reality might have been questioned.

[1] J. Churton Collins pointed this out in his *Illustrations of Tennyson*.

The *English Idylls* were noteworthy experiments in blank verse. In these, in *Ulysses*, and afterwards on a larger scale in *The Princess*, Tennyson proved that he could handle the metre not merely with skill, but with a mastery of varied effects probably unequalled by any English poet except Shakespeare. Milton has made the measure all his own for epic purposes, and he has no rival in the stately music of his lines; but in respect of variety of types of blank verse Tennyson surpasses him. There is a vast difference between the simple measure of *Dora* and that of the rich and musical classical idyll of *Œnone*, or the subtle suggestiveness of *Ulysses*, or the force of *Lucretius*; and there is an immense variety within the limits of the *Idylls of the King*.

We have already seen that Tennyson had from an early date shown a strong interest in those Arthurian romances which have so powerfully attracted the imaginative minds of England, France and Germany from the Middle Ages downwards. In England, Spenser had made use of them; and Milton at one time thought of Arthur as a possible subject for the great poem which was to be the *magnum opus* of his life and to justify the dedication of his talents to what many Puritans regarded as the unprofitable art of poetry. But Milton abandoned the design; and none of those who touched the Arthurian story afterwards had succeeded in making a great poem from it. Just a few years previous to the appearance of the first group of the *Idylls*, Lytton had written an epic on *King Arthur*; but Tennyson could safely ignore this and treat the subject as still open. The poems he had previously written upon episodes or characters of Arthurian romance, except in one instance, were lyrics. *The Lady of Shalott* and *Sir Galahad* are lyrical wholes which do not admit of expansion. *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere* is described as a fragment, but it is evidently one which could never grow into a long poem. These poems, therefore, delightful and beautiful as they are, for the present purpose are no more than items of evidence bearing witness to the attraction the Arthurian legends had for Tennyson.

It appears however, from the biography by his son, that from an early date the poet had contemplated making Arthur the subject of a long work, and had written out prose sketches of the

story. The first hint in verse of such a design is given in the *Morte d'Arthur*, which was originally published as one of the *English Idylls*, where it is introduced as the only one of the twelve books of the poet's epic, "his King Arthur," which has escaped burning. This may be pure playfulness, but it is also possible that there was some foundation for it, and that Tennyson had failed to satisfy himself in an attempt to treat the subject. At any rate, alone among the early Arthurian poems, this is in blank verse, and proves to be capable of indefinite expansion; for as *The Passing of Arthur* it becomes the last book or idyll of the *Idylls of the King*. FitzGerald heard *Morte d'Arthur* read, without the introduction and epilogue, in 1835[1]; and it is remarkable that in this early experiment in a measure so difficult as blank verse Tennyson showed a skill and mastery he never afterwards surpassed. Probably *In Memoriam* thrust aside the Arthurian epic; but not long after the great elegy was finished the mind of the poet was again busy with the subject. Excepting *Morte d'Arthur*, no part of the *Idylls* was published till 1859, when *Enid*, *Vivien*, *Elaine* and *Guinevere* appeared; but in 1857 two of them had been privately printed under the title of *Enid and Nimuë*.

So far as non-dramatic forms are concerned, the question whether Tennyson possessed constructive power must be taken to be finally settled in the negative by the *Idylls*. The most ingenious attempts have been made to find a unity in them. Sometimes the narrative is deemed sufficient, and we are asked to regard the collection as constituting an epic, though, it is admitted, a somewhat episodic one. At other times the unifying principle is found in allegory. All such theories, however, are obviously forced. When they are re-read with an open mind, the *Idylls* obstinately persist in keeping their character of twelve short stories, all, it is true, united by the fact that they move round King Arthur as a centre. But though this gives unity of a sort, it is not the unity of a great work of art; it is certainly not such a unity as makes the books of the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid* and the *Paradise Lost* obviously only parts of the poems to which they

[1] *Life of Tennyson*, i. 194.

belong. The bare history of the publication of the *Idylls* ought to suffice to establish their want of unity. After 1859 there was a pause of ten years, until *The Holy Grail, and other Poems* was published. The "other" idylls in the volume were *The Coming of Arthur*, *Pelleas and Ettarre* and *The Passing of Arthur*, as *Morte d'Arthur* was now called. In 1871 *The Last Tournament* and in 1872 *Gareth and Lynette* appeared; then, after a long pause, the structure was completed by the addition of *Balin and Balan* (1885). If anyone still imagines that there is true unity in a poem which begins at the end, reaches the beginning in mid-course, and the middle at the close, he should turn to the amusing and instructive article on "the Building of the Idylls" in *Literary Anecdotes of the XIX Century*.

There is certainly an element of truth in the allegoric theory. No one who reads *Gareth and Lynette* and *The Holy Grail* can doubt the presence of allegory there. Moreover, the theory has the countenance of Tennyson himself, who speaks of the tales as "new-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul"; and this might seem to be conclusive. But on the other hand, he also protested against being tied down to any one meaning, saying, very sensibly, that "poetry is like shot-silk with many glancing colours. Every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability, and according to his sympathy with the poet[1]." It is not clear, therefore, how far Tennyson meant to press the allegorical interpretation. An examination of the dates of publication deepens the doubts. It so happens that the earliest idylls are those in which the allegorical element is least prominent. Only towards the end do we see the unmistakable marks of symbolism. The idea of allegorical treatment had certainly been present in Tennyson's mind many years before he took the Arthurian story seriously in hand, for one of the early prose sketches is allegorical[2]. But he seems to have let it sink into the background, and to have brought it into prominence again only when the want of a more organic unity began to be seriously felt. In any case, the allegory is vague, shadowy and of dubious inter-

[1] *Life of Tennyson*, ii. 127.

[2] *ibid.* ii. 123.

pretation. Where, except in Bunyan's great work, does allegory *not* exhibit these defects?

For the materials of his *Idylls* Tennyson drew principally upon two sources, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and the *Mabinogion*, supplementing them occasionally from Geoffrey of Monmouth and other sources. He derived his knowledge of the *Mabinogion* from Lady Charlotte Guest's translation. In most of the tales he follows his original pretty closely, and the fact has been urged against him as a reproach. But in truth he would have fallen into a great error had he done otherwise. "Genuine poetic material is handed down in the imagination of man from generation to generation, changing its spirit according to the spirit of each age, and reaching its full development when in the course of time the favourable conditions coincide[1]"; and the man who prefers to invent rather than to use the material thus provided for him dooms himself to oblivion.

Tennyson's course, therefore, was determined for him by his choice of a subject. The great cycles of romance have become part of the raw material of literature, just as the stories of Troy, of Pelops and of Oedipus had for the Greeks. How large has been the part played by the Arthurian legends in the literature not only of England but of Europe is admirably shown in Professor Maccallum's *Tennyson's Idylls and Arthurian Story*. Such being the subject-matter, any wide deviation from it would have given a shock to the feelings. If the adoption of a story be plagiarism, then Shakespeare is the most unblushing of plagiarists. He hardly ever invents the framework of his dramas, and in the case of the Roman plays he draws very freely indeed upon his original. Neither do we impute it for blame to Milton that he owes the framework of *Paradise Lost* to the Bible and the Talmudic legends, or to Aeschylus and Sophocles that they are similarly indebted to the legends of their own race. Such instances (they might easily be multiplied) give strong support to Kuno Fischer's theory of poetic material. The question of the value and the true originality of a poem depends upon the way in

[1] Quoted from Kuno Fischer in Professor Richard Jones's scholarly monograph, *The Growth of the Idylls of the King*.

which the poet handles his material. Just as the ruler who finds a city brick and leaves it marble may be regarded as its second founder, so the poet who by his touch transmutes his baser materials into gold may justly claim property in what he has so transmuted. And much depends upon the nature of the material. Tennyson's relation to his authorities is like Shakespeare's relation to Plutarch rather than his relation to Holinshed. Both Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and Lady Charlotte Guest's *Mabinogion* are excellent; and Tennyson, recognising their excellence, has in many passages been content to versify them, as Shakespeare has versified Plutarch.

At the same time, he introduced many changes, and in particular he threw round the *Idylls* a wholly different atmosphere from that either of the Welsh tales or of Malory. This has been a ground of complaint against the poet. It has been urged with truth that the *Idylls* are not really mediæval, that King Arthur is a modern English gentleman, and that the knights and ladies are as indubitably Victorian as is the poem in which their valour and their beauty are sung. They wear the armour and are dressed in the garments of the Middle Ages, but they speak the speech and think the thoughts of the nineteenth century; their sentiment, their morality, all that belongs to them except the barest externals, are modern. In truth Tennyson was never mediæval. He frequently went back to the Middle Ages for a theme; but if he entered into their spirit at all, he certainly never reproduced it in his poems. It is doubtful whether he seriously tried or wished to do so. He is an intensely modern poet; in spite of his elaborate art, he often seems almost utilitarian in his spirit. He has a "message," like his friend Carlyle; and he can make it more intelligible in the language of his own time than in that of centuries ago. The point is not of much significance. The *Idylls* are anachronistic, and there is an end. If Tennyson imagined they were mediæval, he was mistaken; if a reader is unable to find pleasure except in the mediæval, the *Idylls* are not for him. There remain the great majority who are content to take a thing for what it is, and who are as little disturbed by Tennyson's modernism as they are when Shakespeare makes Ulysses quote

Aristotle, or when Leonardo sets the table-appointments of his own time upon the board on which is spread the Last Supper.

The question of the *quality* of the work is infinitely more important than that of its fidelity to the time in which the scene is laid. Granted that Arthur is but a modern gentleman, the larger question remains whether he is a good type of modern gentleman. The two questions have frequently been confused. We are told in one breath that he is a piece of colourless perfection and that he is no mediæval knight as if the two statements were of the same kind. They are not: the former is a criticism of the drawing of a character; the latter only of its appropriateness to a particular time. A figure, painted on canvas or delineated in words, may be "no mediæval knight" and yet a very excellent type of man; but "colourless perfection" belongs to no age or race of humanity.

Now it is hardly possible to deny that this is a real flaw of the *Idylls*. The "blameless king" is vapid; a little blameworthiness would do him a world of good; we long for some of the "blessed evil" of Browning. And something of unreality clings to all the figures of the *Idylls*, male and female, without exception. The stained and guilty but always knightly Lancelot is the most interesting, because of his very sins; and yet in spite of those sins he too, in respect of his chivalry, is flawed as a character by the very absence of flaw,—"faultily faultless." Tennyson had not yet acquired the knack of delineating men and women; indeed he never succeeded in the idyllic form, though some of the *Idylls* were written after he had won conspicuous success in other forms of verse. In the *Idylls* he is as unsuccessful with the very bad as with the very good. No one can say that Vivien lacks her due share of human frailty, but she very poorly represents the witchery of an unprincipled woman. We have only to compare her with Shakespeare's Cleopatra to realise what consummate work is, and how great is the gulf between it and anything less excellent.

In the whole of the *Idylls* there is nothing more remarkable, nothing more distinctively Tennyson's own, than the treatment of the Quest of the Grail. Originally no part of the Arthurian legend, obscure in origin, it early passed into the cycle, and attained so prominent a place that it threatened to subordinate all the rest to

itself. Nothing in the whole cycle is more characteristic of the mediæval spirit than this. It is profoundly mystical. It is the element of the Church coming in to ennoble and purify and sanctify the world. It makes the Arthurian legends, according to mediæval ideas, a round and complete whole, a world in themselves. For the mediæval mind honoured just two forms of life; the life of arms, idealised in the system of chivalry represented here by the Round Table, as it is in the Charlemagne cycle by "Roland brave and Oliver" and all the paladins and peers who fell at Roncesvalles; and secondly the life of the Church, here introduced by the Quest of the Grail. And that the scripture might be fulfilled the last was first. Wherever the Church entered she claimed precedence: the call to seek the Grail overcame the knightly sense of loyalty to Arthur.

The hero of this legend, Sir Galahad, is the subject of one of Tennyson's early Arthurian poems. He is, as becomes his character, an ascetic:

> "I never felt the kiss of love,
> Nor maiden's hand in mine."

One half of the knightly life is closed to him by the Quest; but another vista opens which more than compensates him for it. He is a visionary, a mystic, and in his visions he finds happiness as perfect as is possible until the Grail, and heaven, are found:

> "Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
> I find a magic bark;
> I leap on board: no helmsman steers:
> I float till all is dark.
> A gentle sound, an awful light!
> Three angels bear the holy Grail:
> With folded feet, in stoles of white,
> On sleeping wings they sail."

The incidents of this Quest are not original with Tennyson: he is nowhere more indebted to his authorities on matters of detail. And yet by a few skilful turns and adaptations, by the setting he gives it in the cycle, he has made the whole spirit his own. It was not possible for the mediæval mind to conceive of evil in connexion with the Quest of the Grail; it was in itself

good, pure, holy. Nearly all the knights failed, many of them met disaster in the Quest; but this was through their own unworthiness. In the Quest itself there was nothing unreal; there could be no abrogation of duty in the fact that a knight elected to follow it.

In the hands of Tennyson the Quest of the Grail becomes one of the two causes which bring about the disruption of the Round Table. The corruption of the court, the sin of Lancelot and Guinevere, the vices of many of the knights, are of course one cause. How deep the vice has eaten and how deplorable has been the fall from the height of a great ideal we see when we contrast the song of the knights in *The Coming of Arthur* with the last sad tourney of the "dead innocence." Contrast

> "The King will follow Christ, and we the King
> In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing,"

with the mournful question of Lancelot to Tristram, victor in this "Tournament of the Dead Innocence":—

> "Hast thou won?
> Art thou the purest, brother? See, the hand
> Wherewith thou takest this is red!"

But corruption is not the only cause that breaks up Arthur's chivalry: the Quest itself leads to the same result. The king foresees the effect. It is "a sign to maim this Order which I made"; the knights are following "wandering fires." The Quest is proper for men like Galahad or Percivale, for those in whom saintliness is inborn. It is a mere misleading will-o'-the-wisp to the ordinary stained and spotted man, sinful, yet capable of work useful for the world,

> "Men
> With strength and will to right the wrong'd, of power
> To lay the sudden heads of violence flat."

The evil of the Quest is that it takes such men from the work they can do and leads them to attempt needlessly and fruitlessly that which they cannot do.

This treatment of the legend is extremely significant, especially with reference to the time at which Tennyson wrote. It is the best standard for measuring the distance which separated the

poet, intellectually, from the Middle Ages. He had no part or lot in that movement which was drawing so many of his contemporaries to think the thoughts of those ages. We see the effect of this attraction in Newman, in the extravagant importance he attaches to the very conception of sin; in the assertion that it would be better the whole world should go to ruin than that the most venial sin should be committed, or that anything should be done which would lead to the commission of such sin. No doubt theology has always been tempted to extravagance on this point; probably many excellent and sensible clergymen would still hesitate to repudiate Newman's language. But if we are to refrain not only from doing that which is sinful, but from that which will produce sin, we must refrain from action altogether—and we shall not succeed then. The greatest minds among Newman's contemporaries altogether reject such teaching. Carlyle taught that a man was to be measured, not by the negative standard of absence of fault, error, sin, but by a far nobler standard—the presence of good. The proper question to ask is not, how few sins has the man committed? but, how much good has he accomplished? Browning taught that evil was necessary for the evolution of good. In a similar spirit Hawthorne, in his great romance, *Transformation*, makes sin the parent of the moral nature of Donatello. All the Utilitarians too recognise the necessary mingling of evil with good and call that action best which produces the greatest balance of good.

Tennyson in the *Idylls* teaches this doctrine too. Arthur finds himself in a world chequered and shadowed with evil as the hills are shadowed with clouds. His task is to make bad better, not to produce perfection; and the tools with which he works are, like the world in which he lives, faulty and of mixed material. The head of gold or of iron may be joined to feet of miry clay; but the king is content to make the best of his instruments, such as they are, and in the process to make the instruments themselves better. He is a statesman, not a visionary. It is to be borne in mind that he, not Sir Galahad, is Tennyson's ideal; and though he is too faultless, his perfection is not the pale perfection of Sir Galahad. The mediæval mind, whatever it might have felt in secret, must

have made obeisance to the ideal of saintliness: Tennyson is thoroughly modern in his refusal to do so. When at last Guinevere recognises the highest, it is "not Lancelot, nor another, but the King." Not Galahad any more than Lancelot, but the man who lives in the world and best does the work of the world.

During the long period between the beginning and the completion of the *Idylls* Tennyson did not concentrate himself on this one work as far as he did on *In Memoriam* in the seventeen years from the death of Arthur Hallam to its publication; for interspersed between the successive parts of the *Idylls* were many important publications which had no bearing upon them. Excluding the *Idylls*, the productions of the last thirty years of Tennyson's life are divisible into two classes—on the one hand dramas, and on the other miscellaneous poems, all more or less short. After the four *Idylls* the first volume of the latter class was that which took its title from *Enoch Arden* (1864). Other poems were included with *The Holy Grail* (1869). *The Lover's Tale*, an early piece which had been printed and then suppressed, was published in 1879. *Ballads and other Poems* (1880), *Tiresias* (1885), *Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After* (1886), *Demeter* (1889) and *The Death of Œnone* (1892), are the other volumes which contain the later miscellaneous poems.

Enoch Arden belongs to the idyllic class, not of the Arthurian type, but rather like the *English Idylls*. The strain of sentimentality which pervades it made it popular, just as the same fault had increased the popularity of *The May Queen*; but it is not among the poems of Tennyson which will live. The volume however contained also pieces of a very different stamp. It contained *The Grandmother* (which had appeared some years earlier in *Once a Week*) and *The Northern Farmer, Old Style*. These poems, and especially the latter, indicate a change in Tennyson of the utmost importance.

A comparison between the miscellaneous poems of these later years and those published up to 1842 yields very interesting results. Through the sixty years of Tennyson's literary life we can trace a steady development; in the opinion of many good judges, not a steady improvement; but certainly a series of changes pro-

ceeding upon a principle and tending towards a definite goal. Among these changes there is none more certain to arrest the attention than the gradual development of the dramatic element even in poems which are not dramatic in form. In the early poems, as we have seen, this element is rather conspicuously absent, and even where we might expect some evidence of dramatic power we fail to find it. None of the figures in *The Princess*, for example, is in the least interesting as a character. Tennyson first proved that he possessed the power of characterisation by the two fine studies of *The Northern Farmer*; and as these are poems in dialect we may conjecture that the freedom and unconventionality of dialect helped to reveal the power to Tennyson himself. If so, the dialect poems are important for other reasons besides their own high merits.

Perhaps the use of dialect was suggested to Tennyson by the *Dorset Poems* (1844–1863) of William Barnes (1801–1886), a man of note alike for the intrinsic value of his poetry and for the fact that he is the first of English dialect poets. Scottish vernacular poetry stands on a different footing. It is supported by a national tradition, and through the existence of Scotland for centuries as an independent political entity the northern dialect of English, there established, never wholly lost the character of a language. Very different was the fate of the dialects of the south. Occasional poems of a popular sort might be written in the speech of the people, but the dialects of the English counties have seldom been cultivated in literature, and never on a considerable scale or with marked success till Barnes showed the way. Thus, though Burns was altogether a greater, more powerful and more varied poet, the exploit of Barnes, simply on the linguistic side, was more remarkable than his. It was the raising at once to literary rank of a mode of speech which had hitherto been used only by peasants.

Barnes was descended from a family which for generations had been rooted in the soil of Dorset, and he had a mother who was gifted with tastes for poetry such as are rarely found among the wives of farmers; but unfortunately she died when the boy was only five. He was, however, physically too feeble for the drudgery of farm life; and his active mind made such good use of his

opportunities of education that he was soon marked out for a career of letters in some shape or other. He became a schoolmaster in 1823, and in 1827 began contributing to periodicals. In middle life he took orders, was presented to the rectory of Came in 1862, and died there twenty-four years afterwards.

Barnes had a mania for linguistic studies, learning, besides the more ordinary languages, Welsh, Russian, Hindustani and Persian. These studies bore fruit in after years in various philological publications, among them a *Philological Grammar*, dealing mainly with English, Latin and Greek, but based upon a comparison of no fewer than sixty languages. But it is by his *Poems in the Dorset Dialect* that Barnes will be remembered. He began writing them in 1833, and the first of them were published in the *Dorset County Chronicle*. Three separate collections were issued—in 1844, 1858 and 1863; and the poet was induced, two years after the first issue, to try the experiment of a volume of poems on such subjects in national English. It was unsuccessful, and is only interesting as showing how completely poetry is a matter of expression.

No verses more sincere and natural than those of Barnes were ever penned. The poet's intellectual endowments enabled him to express admirably the feelings of the rustic population; and all his learning had raised no barrier between him and them, as such gifts and accomplishments often do. When he was induced to give readings, the effect upon local audiences is said to have been extraordinary. They recognised the pictures of scenes, people and occupations, as being true to the very life: the poet had not ceased to be in heart and mind one of themselves. Crabbe has greater strength; but even Crabbe has not profounder knowledge of that about which he writes, and even Crabbe is not more unfalteringly true. Burns has a force of passion to which there is nothing comparable in Barnes; but even Burns is not more genuinely than he the poet of rural life and feeling.

And here perhaps we may find a hint as to the secret of popularity in poetry. It is hardly too much to say that since the decline of Athens the only great poet who has been popular in the widest sense of the word is Robert Burns. Other poets have had audiences wider or narrower; but no one else, at least in our

country, has spoken to the heart of a whole nation; no one else is known by the people, as Burns is known by every class of the inhabitants of Lowland Scotland. Barnes, it is pretty certain, has already lost part of his hold on Dorset—the absence of the literary tradition there tells against the permanence of his influence. But the success of his readings showed that his poetry did go home to the heart even of the most uncultivated audience. Now the point in common between the two poets is that they both deal with the life and the scenes which are most familiar to their audience, and so deal with them that no barrier is raised between poet and people. Many other poets have handled rural subjects; but usually their manner of doing so has practically had the effect of translating them into another language. It would be unfair to insist upon the thoroughly sophisticated pastorals of writers such as Pope. But even Wordsworth, notwithstanding his theory of poetic diction and his life among the Cumberland "statesmen," and Tennyson, notwithstanding the simplicity of his English idylls, speak in a tongue not understanded of the people. The culture and the literary associations of three thousand years are behind their simplest utterance; and hence the uneducated feel the chill of unfamiliarity and turn aside. It is not that they are unresponsive to poetry as such, for most human hearts feel dumbly the poetry of life and of nature. This seems to be proved by the fact that the sparse population of a Welsh valley will yield its score of competitors in an eisteddfodic competition; that three generations after the death of Burns there is hardly a Scottish village which cannot boast of several who know the poet's works really well, and probably of one or two who write verse themselves; that the Dorset rural audiences listened to Barnes, perhaps with most delight to the humorous pieces, but still with appreciation to those of quieter beauty. Burns in Scotland and Barnes in Dorset have the happy knack of weaving language into beautiful poetry without making of their own intellectual superiority a wall between themselves and the sympathies of the people. In Tennyson's *Dora* the chisel of the artist has smoothed away all the rugged homeliness of the rustic. It belongs to another world, it can never stir the emotions which almost any of the eclogues of

Barnes will rouse. For an ordinary English rustic audience, it might almost as well be written in Greek.

What Barnes did best was the eclogue; but it would be a complete mistake to compare him with the writers of conventional pastoral verse. He depicts no Arcadia, with shepherds piping upon oaten reed, and tending their sheep when they have leisure from the serious business of poetry, but a very real work-a-day Dorset. To this world he is confined, and the range afforded by it is not wide; but, such as it is, Barnes knew it in every part and aspect. There is humour in *A bit o' sly Coortin'*, there is good sense mingled with satire in *The Times*, and there is pathos in *Woak Hill*. The *Dorset Poems* moreover display a lyrical gift which, if not very great, is nevertheless such that the greatest would own kinship with its possessor. *A Wold Friend* may be called a Dorset *Auld Lang Syne*, and *The Slanten Light o' Fall* brings pleasantly to mind the Tennysonian idyllic poems.

Perhaps "the Lancashire Burns," Edwin Waugh (1817–1890), may also have helped to turn Tennyson's mind towards dialect. Less gifted than Barnes, he had still a touch of the authentic fire; and even if it were less than it is, his gallant struggle with adversity, his success in educating himself and the sweetness of nature which remained unimpaired when fame was won, would of themselves entitle him to honourable remembrance. These moral excellences call to mind the Scottish collier-poet, David Wingate; but Wingate's verse must be read with an indulgence which Waugh's does not require. The latter first became known through his *Sketches of Lancashire Life and Localities* (1855). Soon after his charming "Come whoam to thi childer and me" gained a success which encouraged him to issue *Poems and Songs* (1859). Afterwards his publications were frequent, and his collected works fill eleven volumes. Waugh would gain greatly by selection. At his best, though not indeed excellent, he is very good; for he had sympathy and humour and an observant eye, and also that understanding of others which is the natural outcome of these qualities. But his real ability is apt to be underrated because of the mass of commonplace work with which he has loaded himself.

If it was the example of Barnes which suggested poetry in dialect to the mind of Tennyson, our debt to the former is all the greater; for there is an unfettered vigour and life about the dialect poems to which there is no parallel in Tennyson's earlier works. The success of *The Northern Farmer* was repeated in *The Northern Cobbler*, *The Spinster's Sweet-Arts*, *Owd Roä* and the delightful *Church-Warden and the Curate*, with its fine touches of humour and its shrewd worldly wisdom:

"If ever tha meäns to git 'igher,
"Tha mun tackle the sins o' the Wo'ld, an' not the faults o' the Squire."

These poems are all intensely dramatic, and it is remarkable that most of the characters seem to have been suggested by single expressions carried in the poet's mind for many years. Thus, *The Northern Farmer, Old Style*, is founded upon the dying words of a farm-bailiff: "God A'mighty little knows what He's about, a-taking me. An' Squire will be so mad an' all." "I conjectured the man from that one sentence," said Tennyson. So too the farmer of the new style was founded on a sentence reported to him, "When I canters my 'erse along the ramper (highway), I 'ears proputty, proputty, proputty[1]." Again, *The Northern Cobbler* sprang from a story of a man who "set up a bottle of gin in his window when he gave up drinking, in order to defy the drink[2]." And the pathetic *Grandmother*, which is a kind of pioneer to such pieces, is based upon the saying of an old lady, "The spirits of my children always seem to hover about me[3]."

The art of delineating character once learnt, it proved possible to apply it, not only in poems where the dialect makes something like a new language, but where, as in the noble *Rizpah*, it is unimportant, or even where there is no dialect at all. Examples of the latter kind are the masterly sketch of *Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham*, and *Romney's Remorse*. Because of the language these are more akin than the dialect poems to the classical sketches of earlier days; but they are far more dramatic than the latter. Sir John Oldcastle is an individual man; so is Romney. Ulysses is a type: he is the stoical soul. Neither is it the

[1] *Life of Tennyson*, ii. 9. [2] *ibid.* ii. 251.
[3] *ibid.* i. 432.

individuality of the man that impresses us in *Lucretius*. Powerful and exquisitely beautiful as these poems are, they do not read like the work of a man of dramatic genius.

This movement towards the dramatic form of art is one of several changes which during the last fifteen or twenty years of his life gave Tennyson's work more of Browning's "veined humanity"; and perhaps Browning's example helped to bring about the change. The thought too continues to grow in weight. While the greater number of the early poems have no theme which could find expression in prose at all, a large proportion of the later ones have subjects on which essays or dissertations might be written. They are never prosaic: Tennyson was far too good an artist to fall into that mistake. But he has passed the boundary line which divides two great classes of the lovers of verse. To some, *Kubla Khan* and *The Ancient Mariner* are the very acme of poetry; others would not give a single one of the *Canterbury Tales* for whole volumes of such dreams. Those who prefer poems which are poems and nothing else like best the Tennyson of the earlier days; those who prefer a theme, turn rather to the later Tennyson. To some the shadowy, mystical, elusive *Lady of Shalott* may seem more precious than all the *Idylls of the King*.

Tennyson has himself supplied a measure of the change in the two poems, *Locksley Hall* and *Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After*; and these two accordingly are found to divide readers much in the way suggested. Another feeling, however, enters here as well. An old favourite is not easily displaced, and a second treatment of a subject once successfully dealt with by a great writer is rarely received with thankfulness. Even change is dangerous, as Addison pointed out to Pope sensibly enough, though he proved to be mistaken in the particular instance. Another instance of this unconscious partiality occurs in the works of Tennyson himself. He wrote his well-known *Charge of the Light Brigade* when the whole country was ringing with the glory and throbbing with the grief of the charge. The verses are not great poetry, but they are extremely spirited, and they echo the tramp of charging horse. Therefore they won their place in

the heart of the nation when it was open to receive them. Some thirty years later the poet celebrated in verses not quite so impetuous and rushing, but far more skilful, far more subtly adapted to the subject, the charge of the Heavy Brigade. But the earlier poem still holds the field. Everyone knows it, while only the lovers and readers of poetry know the later one.

The same prejudice tells powerfully in favour of the earlier *Locksley Hall.* It too is far more widely known than the later poem is ever likely to be; and yet on its merits there is much to be said for *Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After.* The question here, however, is not the relative merits of the two poems, but the measure they afford of the distance traversed by Tennyson, in art, between 1842 and 1886. Both, of course, are dramatic utterances, but they are none the less representative. Now the essential difference between the two poems is just that the earlier one is of much slighter substance, more visionary, less realistic. The young man is a dreamer, optimistic at heart in spite of the bitterness due to thwarted passion. He is sanguine of the progress of science, sanguine of the establishment of universal peace, sanguine of a steady progress through the ages—"Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change[1]." In the later poem the old man is far less optimistic, and for the visions of heavens filled with commerce and of "airy navies grappling in the central blue," he substitutes the sad comment of his eighty years' experience:

> "Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over time and space,
> Staled by frequence, shrunk by usage into commonest commonplace."

The hope of universal peace has faded away into a future too dim and distant to influence action or to inspire hope. Science has not cured the evils under which men groan. The slums of the cities, their dirt and vice and disease, show to the old man that the process the youth thought nearly ended is hardly even begun. The picture is gloomy but it is powerful. If it is less attractive

[1] The phrase "grooves of change" was suggested to Tennyson by a ride in the first train from Liverpool to Manchester, when he thought that the wheels ran in a groove.

than the one which is drawn in the earlier poem, it has that strength which fidelity to the real always gives.

Along with these changes in substance there goes a change in versification also. The two poems just spoken of are again typical. The later is less smooth than the earlier; and in many other pieces as well Tennyson seems to have sought to produce the impression of rugged strength either by his choice of metre or by his method of handling it. The reason is not decline of skill, for the metre is admirably adapted to the end in view; and when he has another purpose the poet can be as smooth as of old,—witness the beautiful *Crossing the Bar*, or the exquisite lullaby in *The Foresters*, which for delicacy of touch will bear comparison with any of Tennyson's songs:—

"To sleep! to sleep! The long bright day is done,
And darkness rises from the fallen sun.
To sleep! to sleep!
Whate'er thy joys, they vanish with the day;
Whate'er thy griefs, in sleep they fade away.
To sleep! to sleep!
Sleep, mournful heart, and let the past be past!
Sleep, happy soul! all life will sleep at last.
To sleep! to sleep!"

There remain to notice only the dramas, which are the most remarkable, though also in the opinion of many the most unfortunate, of the later developments of Tennyson's work. But whatever we may think of the quality of Tennyson's dramas, a careful examination of his work makes it evident that they were the natural goal to which he was bound to come. Writing for the stage is just the last step in the process which we see in the dialect poems. The dramas open with *Queen Mary* (1875), which was speedily followed by *Harold* (1876); then came *Becket*[1], *The Cup* and *The Falcon*, all in 1884. *The Foresters*, published in the year of the poet's death, bears marks of declining powers. The other shorter plays are all more or less faulty also. Neither *The Falcon* nor *The Promise of May* would vindicate the poet's claim to the title of dramatist. Of the minor dramatic

[1] It had been printed in 1879.

pieces the best is *The Cup*, which is powerfully written, and in which the characters are well and clearly drawn.

But upon Tennyson as a dramatist judgment must pass in respect of the three English historical plays. As a rule it has been given decisively against him: Mr Stopford Brooke has even written a large volume of criticism on Tennyson alone, without deeming it necessary to criticise the dramas at all. Here again, however, we may suspect the influence of unconscious prejudice. Just as the popularity of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* operates against the acceptance of *The Charge of the Heavy Brigade*, and the earlier *Locksley Hall* against the later, so the very greatness and the deep-rooted fame of Tennyson as a lyrist, as author of *In Memoriam* and of *Idylls of the King*, make it at first a little difficult to think of him as also a dramatist. If Shakespeare had spent a long life in writing exquisite songs and sonnets and narrative poems, had been recognised for many years as *facile princeps* in his art, and then had suddenly produced *Hamlet*, possibly his contemporaries would have resented it. Probably too in 1875 no critic opened *Queen Mary* without a more or less conscious expectation that it would prove, if not a failure, at any rate something below its author's level. That certainly was the critical verdict, and it cannot be denied that the verdict was sound. *Queen Mary* showed that Tennyson had still a good deal to learn about dramatic art. It contains matter enough for two plays. The stage is overcrowded, and one character jostles out another, so that all but a few of the chief ones remain undeveloped. There is bustle without movement, and where there ought to be excitement the reader is cold and listless. What is perhaps most disappointing of all is the fact that *Queen Mary* is not a specially poetical play.

Harold showed that, though he was nearer seventy than sixty when he wrote *Queen Mary*, the poet was not yet too old to learn. He reduced the figures of his drama to manageable numbers, he made the action more rapid, he put life into the characters. The figure of Harold himself is admirably drawn—bold, frank, truthful, yet led by an inevitable destiny into lies and the breach of his oath. He stands between two worlds, the last of the old race and its

champion, yet with gleams in his thought from the new world which is to rise from its ashes. Half-sceptic, he yet feels the force of dreams and prophecies and portents which he less than half believes.

> "They seem to me too narrow, all the faiths
> Of this grown world of ours, whose baby eye
> Saw them sufficient."

He scoffs at the portent of the comet. Yet the knowledge that he has sworn falsely on the bones of the saints almost palsies his arm, and he is saddened by the bowing of the Holy Rood, even while he remains uncertain whether it bowed at all or no, or what was signified if it did bow. The other figures too are good. William of Normandy, though much more lightly sketched than Harold, forms an effective contrast. So does Edith to Aldwyth. The former is perhaps the most charming of all Tennyson's women.

Becket showed still further advance, both in dramatic management and in respect of the delineation of character. It is indeed the greatest literary drama of recent years. The prologue is perhaps questionable in art; for it seems hardly proper for the dramatist to reveal so much of his purpose ere the action begins. But it is admirably written, and whether proper or not for the spectator in the theatre, it is useful to the student in the closet. No commentary in the same space can reveal so much of the mind and purpose of the writer. In *Becket* Tennyson is happy in the first place in his choice of subject. The crisis of the struggle between Church and State in the reign of Henry II is not only one of the most important, but one of the most strikingly dramatic, in English history, and it is surprising that it had not been used up before. Moreover, the great question is, for dramatic purposes, very happily embodied in the two characters of Henry and Becket, whom Tennyson brings together with excellent effect. There are striking points both of resemblance and of difference between them,—of resemblance principally by nature, and of difference arising from circumstance and training. By nature, Becket is a stronger Henry; and the Churchman's superiority is further increased by better discipline

and by self-restraint. The female characters, Eleanor and Rosamund, are on the other hand contrasted, the hard glitter of the former showing up the gentleness of the latter. In this play and in *Harold* lies the justification of Tennyson's experiments in the drama. He had acquired the dramatic skill which he did not possess when he wrote *Queen Mary*, and the poetry which seemed to have deserted him in that play had returned. The best part of ten years of his life had been devoted—or so it seemed—to these experiments, and not unnaturally his admirers grudged the time. But he judged better than they. He could hardly have surpassed himself in other forms of verse, or added anything strikingly new; while the figures of Harold and Becket, of Edith and Eleanor, are memorable additions to the dramatic gallery of England.

Of all the poetical writings of the Victorian era, those just passed in review are the most broadly representative of the age to which they belong. It was this fact, quite as much as the excellence of his work, which made Tennyson the most popular poet of his time: he gained the ear of the age, because, as we have seen, he spoke with its voice. The excellences are obvious. With less fervour and inspiration than Shelley, he has a more certain touch. His best work is hardly equal to the best of Keats, but he has left so much more that is good and even excellent as to fill a bigger place in literature. But in some respects the causes which brought about his popularity are likely to tell against his permanent fame. He is too prone to echo back the thoughts of his own time and country. Patriotism is good; but it is not a pure good when there goes along with it a hard, unsympathetic tone of mind towards other races; and in Tennyson we hear rather too much of "the blind hysterics of the Celt," and "the red fool-fury of the Seine." He lived under the sway of the Teutonic idea, and already the Teutonic idea is discredited. Shakespeare is no less patriotic, but in the universal range of his sympathies are embraced the Italian, the Jew and the Moor, as well as the Englishman. A similar impression is left when we examine Tennyson's intellectual range. *In Memoriam* is in one aspect an essay in apologetics. For this reason it appealed to his contemporaries, but it will survive in spite of this, not because of it. While

beauty is independent of time, particular forms of doubt and belief are not. Men may agree to use the same phrases, but there can be no effectual agreement to mean the same thing by them.

Such special causes of temporary popularity will tend not to remembrance but to oblivion in ages to come. It is a great thing to have expressed best of all the thought and feeling of one century; but it is not so great as to have expressed the thoughts of all centuries. When the time is gone the interest passes away. There remains, however, to be set against this the pure and exquisite beauty of much of Tennyson's work, the melody of his verse, the perennial charm of the literary associations which he, better than any contemporary, knew how to impart to his poetry. There remains also the mass of thought which is not of one age but of all. By virtue of these Tennyson's memory is safe.

CHAPTER V

BROWNING

BROWNING'S poems vary in quality at least as widely as Tennyson's; and there are differences in tone between the works of one period as a whole and those of another. But there is no such revolution as that which is implied in the development of the dramatic element in Tennyson. On the contrary, the principle upon which Browning's work is based remains singularly uniform from beginning to end: he never swerved from the conviction that his genius was fundamentally dramatic. He contrasts with Tennyson also in his remarkable independence. Only a few great poets owe so much to their predecessors as Tennyson, while hardly any are so entirely self-sustained as Browning. Tennyson is full of echoes from the classics; but though Browning knew all the Greek and Latin poets, there are few lines or phrases in his works which can be traced back to them. Browning could when he pleased interweave among his lines literary reminiscences drawn from his vast reading. But his method of conception was essentially his own, and his work did not readily amalgamate with the work of others. The echoes of Shelley in his early poetry seem not quite in keeping with the context. He felt the incongruity, and early learnt to rely upon himself alone.

Even his marriage with a poetess had little influence upon Browning's work. Though there is a change after 1846, the greater part of it seems to be due not to her but to himself: it was something which would have come whether he had married

or not. The scanty success achieved after many efforts made his abandonment of the drama almost inevitable. No doubt the long residence in Italy was a result of the marriage, and no doubt it strengthened the Italian influence. But this was no new thing: Browning had visited Italy before, and had already felt the charm of the Italian Renascence. Further, although he knew and loved Italian literature, his own work remains Teutonic in spirit. Perhaps no English poet ever knew any foreign country as well as Browning knew Italy; certainly none has ever dedicated more of his best work to a land which was not his own. *Pippa Passes*, *Luria*, *A Soul's Tragedy*, *Andrea del Sarto*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *The Bishop at St Praxed's*, with many more of the shorter poems, and the great *Ring and the Book* itself, are all Italian in subject-matter; they show an infinity of knowledge; and yet not one of them could for a moment be conceived to be the work of an Italian. Tennyson's knowledge of the country, the people and the literature was far narrower, but there is a great deal more of the spirit of Italian poetry embodied in his verse. Byron is far less alien. The Elizabethan dramatists seem more in harmony with Venice or Verona than Browning ever is.

If Keats was born a Greek, Browning was born a Goth—the author of *The City of Dreadful Night* has said so in other words. His case proves how much spiritual affinity has to do with literary resemblances, and how dangerous is the argument that such resemblances indicate direct influence. Anyone familiar with German philosophy as well as with Browning would be tempted to argue that the latter had been powerfully swayed by the philosophers, and that some of his most characteristic and most frequently reiterated ideas were borrowed from them. And yet the poet "was emphatic in his assurance that he knew neither the German philosophers nor their reflection in Coleridge[1]." Why, then, is it that there is in his poetry far more of the spirit of that Germany in which he never lived, and whose language and literature he knew very imperfectly, than there is of Italy, though he knew it thoroughly and lived in it for many of the best years of his life? No answer can be given more definite than that, some-

[1] Mrs Sutherland Orr's *Life of Browning*, 108.

how, the poet was born a Goth. But stress must not be laid on blood; for English, Scotch, German and Creole meet in Robert Browning; and some believe that there was a Jewish element as well.

The Brownings settled in Italy, partly for the sake of Mrs Browning's health, and partly because the unhappy relations between her and her father, on account of his violent and unreasonable opposition to the marriage, made it desirable that father and daughter should live far apart. Their home, till Mrs Browning's death, was at Florence, whence Browning sent his two next works, *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* (1850) and *Men and Women* (1855).

The former of these poems is the only work of Browning's in which we may with probability trace the influence of Mrs Browning; and even in this instance the influence is conjectural. The manner is Browning's, and the subject is one which would naturally attract him. It may, therefore, be no more than a coincidence that the poet's first publication after his marriage is that in which he most explicitly deals with questions of religion, or rather of theology, for he is religious throughout. But whatever may be the secret of its genesis, *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* is a poem of peculiar interest as that in which the poet's own views are most clearly revealed; for in spite of the dramatic principle we may safely ascribe to himself a large part of its substance. It is further interesting because of a connexion, unusually close for Browning, with contemporary thought. In this respect Browning is unlike all his chief contemporaries. Tennyson, Arnold, Clough, Rossetti and Dobell, all betray themselves not only as poets of the nineteenth century, but of a particular decade or, at widest, a particular quarter of it. The themes which caught their imagination would not have caught it a little earlier or a little later, or else they would have been treated differently. But Browning did not much love to work on topics connected with his own generation. To him, time was a matter almost of indifference; for the human soul, in which his interest was centred, has remained much the same since the days of Adam. If he had a preference, it was for the Italian Renascence

rather than for any other age or country. Nevertheless, he kept his eyes open to what was taking place around him. *Sludge the Medium* shows that he was awake to the rise of spiritualism; perhaps because Mrs Browning would not allow him to sleep. He was also interested, in a scornful way, in the ecclesiastical ferment caused by Newman. He was familiar with all the "thrilling views of the surplice question," and he was contemptuously amused by the clerical figure with the chains of Peter round his waist, and his back "brave with the needlework of noodledom." So too he noted the effect of *Essays and Reviews* and of Colenso's work as well as the negative criticism of the German school; while he showed no more inclination to accept this without reserve than to give over his intellect into the keeping of the Catholic party.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Browning should have chosen in *Christmas Eve* to make his comments upon the two extreme forms of faith which divide his countrymen, and upon the form of scepticism which was threatening both. As the representatives of faith he chooses, on the one hand, ultra-Protestantism, "the dissidence of dissent," and, on the other, Roman Catholicism. In both he finds much to question and to reject, but in both he finds present the "one thing needful," love. This is where churches and chapels have the decisive advantage over the German professor's lecture-room. The last speaks only to the intellect, they address the heart; and Browning is always disposed to give the heart a higher place than the head. Stupid as is the doctrine of the Nonconformist preacher, and gross as is the yoke of Rome, either is preferable to the negations of the German professor. The two former may "poison the air for healthy breathing,"

> "But the Critic leaves no air to poison;
> Pumps out with ruthless ingenuity
> Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity."

It will be observed that, proceeding from a different starting-point, *Paracelsus* reaches a similar conclusion. The difference between the two poems is that the earlier is fundamentally philosophical,

the later one, religious. In this case at least the change is not an improvement. In the shadowy figure of Christ which guides the speaker, warns him against contempt for faith, even stupid faith, and deserts him when he goes where no faith is, there is no adequate counterpoise to the loss of the free discussion and the dramatic evolution of *Paracelsus*.

There are two artistically excellent pieces in *Christmas Eve*. One is the admirably humorous description of the gathering of the congregation in the little chapel. It is an imaginary scene, but it is convincing. Browning's picture, taken from nowhere, has, nevertheless, the fidelity of a photograph, and in scores and hundreds of places in England it is reproduced, year in year out, in all its details, except the presence of the poet. And the triumph of the poet is that out of all this ugliness he has made something which is, though faithful, yet artistically beautiful, and through all the vulgarity of the doctrine he has retained sympathy. The second passage, scarcely less admirable, is the picture of the German professor himself. Little as Browning likes the teaching, he cannot but admire the "martyr to mild enthusiasm," even though it be enthusiasm for destruction.

Easter Day is less varied than the companion piece, and on the whole it is less successful as a poem. Superficially viewed, it seems to teach a doctrine of asceticism, for the soul in the vision is condemned because it has refused to renounce the pleasures of the world. But this is certainly not the meaning. Browning was no ascetic. To him, the world "means intensely, and means good"; and no one has sung more fervidly than he the delight of life. "How good is man's life, the mere living," cries David in *Saul*; and not only David, but Pippa, the gipsy Duchess, Fra Lippo Lippi, and the Bishop of St Praxed's—characters morally lofty and morally low—are all alike keenly alive to the pleasures of sense. Neither does the poet impute it to them for blame; on the contrary, to the end of his life he teaches that it is a merit. The pleasures the world yields, wisely used, are instruments to the mind, as food is an instrument to the body: both are equally legitimate and may be equally necessary. In *Two Camels* it is the abstemious animal that breaks down, and he does so because of

foolish abstinence. *Rabbi Ben Ezra* condemns the opposition between soul and flesh:—

> "Let us not always say
> 'Spite of this flesh to-day
> I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!'
> As the bird wings and sings,
> Let us cry 'All good things
> Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!'"

The poet was capable of sympathy with asceticism when directed to higher ends; but for asceticism as an end in itself he had nothing but dislike. So it is in *Easter Day* as well. A careful reading shows that here too what the poet really teaches is not asceticism. The condemnation of the erring soul is pronounced, not because the world has been enjoyed, but because the enjoyment of it has stood in the way of something higher. The soul in its complete contentment with the beauty and delight of the world has forgotten what is greater still, the love of the Maker of it; and sentence passes in vindication of this higher thing. The analogy with *Paracelsus* is again manifest. Neither truth nor beauty, far less pleasure, is the central point of Browning's system, but love.

Five years after these two poems Browning published *Men and Women*, the collection which gained, and on the whole has retained, the widest popularity of all his works. Not that the poems so named in the collected editions of his works are to be identified with the volume so named in 1855. Then, the "men and women" were fifty in number, and there was an additional poem, the beautiful *One Word More*, addressed to his wife. Many of them are now to be found among the *Dramatic Lyrics* and *Dramatic Romances*; while the one-act drama, *In a Balcony*, stands by itself. Various causes may be assigned for the popularity of *Men and Women*. The poet was in the full maturity and vigour of his powers, and the method he adopted was that which best suited his genius. Moreover, he is here less difficult to understand, less crabbed and eccentric than he too frequently is. The quality therefore is very high, and the average level is perhaps more uniformly sustained than it is anywhere else. Even those, there-

fore, who think that Browning has done still greater things, will admit that the admirers of *Men and Women* have much to say in justification of their preference.

But *Men and Women* does not stand alone. In substance and principle its contents are closely akin to the *Dramatic Lyrics* and *Dramatic Romances* of *Bells and Pomegranates*, and also to *Dramatis Personae* (1864). They are akin likewise to the *Pacchiarotto*, the *Dramatic Idylls*, the *Parleyings*, and other volumes of later days. But the later groups are all marred by the growing eccentricity and, as it would seem, the wilfulness, of Browning, so that, except for a few pieces here and there, they are hardly worthy to be put beside the earlier collections. These collections form together one of the most precious and profoundly original of all the contributions to the poetic literature of the nineteenth century. Browning did not invent the dramatic monologue, but he made it specially his own, and no one else has ever put such rich and varied material into it. The defects which prevented his complete success in the regular drama are not apparent in this cognate form. He takes just what interests him, and consequently he is nearly always inspired, nearly always at his best. The style, indeed, is invariably his own and does not change with the character as it should; but under such conditions the fact matters little. Few of the poems are long enough to render the fault conspicuous, and a monologue cannot present that contrast of characters which would make it wholly unnatural.

All that is best and all that is most characteristic of Browning is represented in these dramatic monologues. They include the finest of his poems of love, and in nothing is Browning more distinguished than in these. *Evelyn Hope*, *The Last Ride Together*, *One Way of Love*, *Any Wife to any Husband*, *A Woman's last Word*, *By the Fireside*, *In a Gondola*, *The Worst of It*, *Porphyria's Lover*, *James Lee's Wife*, *One Word More* and *Lyric Love*, are a collection not to be paralleled in English poetry, nor, probably, in the poetry of any language. The most remarkable thing about them all is their complete independence of convention and their elevation of tone. The ordinary love-song is inspired by desire and has no small element of physical passion. This

sensuousness characterised, in particular, the poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites, a few years after the date we have reached. But in Browning the intellectual element is too powerful to allow this predominance of sense even when the poet is dealing with the relations of the sexes. All these poems throb with emotion, yet none of them, except *In a Gondola*, can be said to be absorbed in it. *Porphyria's Lover*, though a study of madness, is, like all the rest, inspired by intellect.

Connected with this point is the fact that while Minnesinger and Troubadour and Cavalier sing the song of desire not gratified, many of Browning's are poems of fruition, the utterance of the husband or the wife, of a love happy or unhappy, but, in either case, of one which looks to the present and the past at least as much as to the future. Connected with it too is the fact that nearly all Browning's pieces are dramatic. *One Word More* is the expression of the poet's love for his wife, and the beautiful apostrophe, *Lyric Love*, is addressed to her disembodied spirit. For this reason these two pieces have not only the charm of a rare beauty, but that peculiar interest which belongs to the personal utterance of a poet who is habitually dramatic. All the others are dramatic. A poet like Burns is never dramatic; and as a rule the lyric utterance of love has not been genuinely dramatic even when it has been so in form. But Browning's pieces are dramatic in essence and not merely in show. He conceives some definite situation, his poem gives the emotions of the *persona dramatis* placed in that situation, and thus the individuality of the speaker is brought out. Perhaps, because of its wider range, *James Lee's Wife* is the best illustration. It traces the woman's mind dramatically through all the stages, from the first dawning of suspicion that her husband's love is gone from her until the separation. Its success depends wholly upon Browning's realisation of the character. The fundamentals of human nature are merely the groundwork: the passion of love is individualised by Browning as much as the passion of avarice is individualised by Shakespeare in the person of Shylock.

One result of this dramatic conception is that Browning has greatly the advantage in point of variety over all the other lyrists

of love. The only limits are the possibilities of dramatic situation and of variety of character within the poet's range of conception. And in Browning's case the range is wide. *James Lee's Wife* gives one phase of jealousy; but there is a widely different one in *Cristina and Monaldeschi* and again in *The Worst of It.* In Cristina it leads to revenge, an end true to nature, but common enough. In *The Worst of It* we have one of the most striking examples of Browning's originality. It is the utterance of a man whose wife has been unfaithful to him; but instead of breaking out into wild rage at the wrong done to him, Browning's speaker is agonised to think of the degradation the guilty wife has brought upon herself. His love survives the wrong he has suffered: what he can hardly realise is the wrong she has done against herself:—

> "She ruined? How? No heaven for her?
> Crowns to give, and none for the brow
> That looked like marble and smelt like myrrh?
> Shall the robe be worn, and the palm-branch borne,
> And she go graceless, she graced now
> Beyond all saints, as themselves aver?"

Equal self-command, exercised in a widely different spirit and with another result, is shown in *A Forgiveness.* In *Porphyria's Lover*, *In a Gondola* and *Evelyn Hope* there is scarcely less originality and freshness. The first depicts the lover and murderer sitting with the murdered girl's head on his shoulder; the second, the death-scene of the lover stabbed by the side of her he loves; and the third, loveliest perhaps of all, is the old man's declaration of his love for the dead girl, the emblem of their secret enclosed within the "sweet cold hand," and his confidence that she will "wake, and remember, and understand."

Scarcely second in importance even to the poems treating of love are those which deal with religion, and in pieces of this class the group of publications under consideration is remarkably rich. The principal poems can be arranged in a sort of order, according to the character or situation conceived; and when they are so arranged we see that they cover nearly the whole range of religious thought from the first dim gropings of the natural man for something above himself up to complete faith, and thence downwards

again to scepticism. Thus that profoundly interesting poem, *Caliban upon Setebos*, has its purpose revealed by its secondary title, "Natural Theology in the Island." The hint is taken from Shakespeare; and the deity, Setebos, whom Caliban evolves from his own mind, is such as might be conceived by a brutal savage, not without intellect, but completely destitute of the moral virtues. The poem might serve as a sermon on Goethe's text, "Man never knows how anthropomorphic he is," and it goes to show that each man has the god whom he deserves. As Caliban's deity is created entirely out of his own nature, the motives attributed to him are those upon which Caliban himself would act. He spares or destroys his creatures, "loving not, hating not, just choosing so," even as Caliban lets twenty crabs go and crushes the twenty-first. The covert satire on theology is highly effective. The satiric vein is rare in Browning; but *Caliban upon Setebos*, *Sludge the Medium* and *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, prove that he possessed the gift and only lacked the will to use it.

Above *Caliban* stand poems such as *Cleon* and the *Epistle of Karshish*, which express the mood of mind of a heathen brought into contact, more or less intimate, with Christianity. In the former the contact is of the slightest. Cleon, a Greek of the highest gifts and accomplishments, has heard of Paulus, who, however, proves to be "a mere barbarian Jew," possibly identical with Christus; and Cleon has all a Greek's contempt for barbarians. It is inconceivable that anything hid from him can be known to such as they. Nevertheless, Cleon bears witness to the natural craving for that which Christianity promises, namely immortality. It seems so natural and so right that he could accept it all, were not the circumstances incredible: were it true, Jove surely must have revealed it to the Greeks. In the *Epistle of Karshish*, a closer contact comes to a man by nature more prone to believe; for Karshish is not a rationalising Greek, but an Arab physician who has a touch of the mysticism of his race, which holds in check the sceptical tendency of his scientific training. He has seen and talked with Lazarus, the story of the raising from the dead impresses him in spite of himself, and something not altogether earthly in the bearing of Lazarus compels him to pay

an attention to the story which a mere ordinary tale of miracle would not deserve. The character of Karshish as a reasoner and a man of science obliges him to thrust this story aside; but it recurs again and again in spite of him. What most deeply impresses him is the conception of the *love* of God, and of the union of human attributes with omnipotence. Granting the truth of Lazarus' story, that Christ was very God, then "the All-Great were the All-Loving too"; and the temptation to believe this is so strong that Karshish is almost prepared to bear the scoffs and jeers of his sceptical friends and accept the new faith.

Two other poems, *Saul* and *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, are the utterances of Israelites; but the latter is so highly idealised that it may be regarded as almost independent of time, place and circumstance. *Saul*, a poem unsurpassed for lyrical fervour and beauty, evidently occupied Browning's thoughts for a long time. The first half of it appeared among *Bells and Pomegranates*; but it had to wait ten years for completion, and the whole was carefully revised. The speaker is David, and the poem is a prophecy of the Messiah who had been promised to the line of Jesse—not, however, the Messiah of Jewish tradition, but the Christian Messiah. The two great points of *Karshish*, the humanity in Godhead and the union of infinite love with infinite power, are in *Saul* likewise. But there is a difference. What in *Karshish* is no more than a hope —is hardly even that—becomes in *Saul* a confident prophecy. Though the time is pre-Christian, the fulness of conviction makes it essentially a Christian poem.

We reach the culmination in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, one of the greatest poems Browning ever wrote. It is put into the mouth of a Jew; but for once Browning is not anxious to individualise, his aim is rather to idealise. Rabbi Ben Ezra is an old man, the type of all that is best and wisest in his race. There is no dogma in his utterances, nothing distinctive of the Jewish or even of the Christian faith. What he says might be appropriately put into the mouth of a Socrates or of a St Francis of Assisi; for the purest religion is of any creed, or of none. The poem is the embodiment of all that is deepest in Browning's philosophy of religion, and all that is highest in his morality. Nowhere else, except in the Pope of *The Ring and the Book*, can we be so sure that we have Brown-

ing's own thought, just the best that he can conceive, unaltered and unmodified by dramatic conditions. What induced Browning to ascribe these thoughts to Rabbi Ben Ezra may have been the fact that the Rabbi was one of those Jews who taught the doctrine of immortality; for this is the teaching of the poem too. No more confident and triumphant poem was ever written; it has the magnificent faith of certain of the Psalms. The Rabbi welcomes age: it is "the last of life, for which the first was made." He welcomes pain and doubt: they indicate kinship to God, closer than that of the brutes which are undisturbed by them. He refuses to accept "apparent failure": better high aim than low achievement—"a brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale." And all is summed up in the doctrine of a universe divinely governed. *Carpe diem* is folly:—

> "Fool! All that is, at all,
> Lasts ever, past recall;
> Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
> What entered into thee,
> *That* was, is, and shall be:
> Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure."

Browning afterwards expanded this teaching, and made it argumentative in *La Saisiaz*; but he never improved upon it, never, perhaps, touched the subject so wisely again.

A Death in the Desert belongs, like *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, to the volume of *Dramatis Personae*, and is also notable among the religious poems. It is lower, as theology is lower than religion; but it adds one thing of importance which is absent from the other poem, the element of definite Christian doctrine. As a rule, Browning is disposed to shun this; but in *A Death in the Desert* St John, dying solitary in extreme old age, the last of all who have personally known the Christ, argues out his faith on the ground of what he has seen and known. In doing so he gives expression to the thoughts rather of Browning's time than of the historical St John. The poet's purpose was not so much to carry back the mind to the first century of the Christian era, as to put in the most impressive way the arguments which were likely to carry conviction to his own generation. The poem, therefore, while it is dramatic in its accessories—the cave in which the old man lies

dying, his attendants and the Bactrian sentinel—is hardly more dramatic in thought than *Rabbi Ben Ezra*; but the scene and the character add impressiveness to the statement of difficulties and the emphatic assertion of knowledge on the part of the dying man.

Lucretius thought that religion was the great bane of the human race, and he could give striking support to his opinion. Widely as Browning differed, he too was conscious of the element of evil, and he shows part of it in *Holy-Cross Day*. Another aspect, again, is shown in *Bishop Blougram's Apology*. The apology is put into the mouth of a man who is not quite sure whether to believe or not. Seventy years ago men were certain on the subject, and Blougram would have been a sceptic; but times have changed, and he is a man of the time. It is safer to believe; there can be no harm in it; whereas there is disastrous harm to the sceptic if the creeds happen to be right. Moreover, it pays to believe—or to act belief. By so acting Blougram has got all the best the earth affords, and he points out to Gigadibs, who values himself on his unbelief, how much more practically wise his own course has been and how much more fruit it has yielded. Hardly ever has Browning sustained dramatic propriety better than in this piece: it rivals *Sludge the Medium* and *The Bishop at St Praxed's*, each a masterpiece in its way, and is perhaps clearly surpassed only by *Guido*. Browning, of course, knows that the argument is sophistical. A faith assumed not because it is believed, but because it would be safe to believe it, is, in the real sense of the word faith, absurd. But Blougram is allowed to speak for himself without the least interference from his creator; he scores a triumph over Gigadibs; and it is not even clear that Browning does not sympathise with him rather than with Gigadibs, though the latter is the honester man of the two. Certainly Blougram has won worldly success, and within its limits worldly success is a good thing. But the poet must have smiled sardonically when Wiseman expressed the opinion that possibly the author of the collection of poems among which his own portrait appeared might be converted to the Catholic faith.

There is no other group of poems which holds so much of the soul of the poet as these two; but the poems on art are inferior in

importance only to them. Like the great leaders of the Italian Renascence, Browning did not confine his interest within the limits of one art. As Raphael wrote his solitary poem, and as Dante prepared to paint his single angel, so Browning felt the impulse to express himself through another medium than words. He even studied the arts of painting and modelling, and though the labour he spent probably yielded nothing worth preserving in the shape of picture or bust, it gave him knowledge of which he has made good use in his poetry.

In his own proper art too Browning was not content with practice merely; he was all through his life a profound student of the theory as well. Evidences of this study are to be found as early as *Pauline*, and in *Paracelsus* we have the figure of the poet Aprile, who is far indeed from representing Browning's conception of the perfect artist-character, but who certainly embodies his view of some of its tendencies and dangers. Long afterwards, in *Fifine at the Fair* and in *Aristophanes' Apology*, he gives an elaborate and carefully reasoned theory of poetic art. And among the productions of this intermediate period are quite a large number which deal, mostly in a dramatic way, with poetry or with painting or with music. Thus *Transcendentalism* and *How it Strikes a Contemporary* relate to poetry, the latter showing that Browning's conception of the dignity of the poet's function might have satisfied Milton himself; for the threadbare poet is no less than the "general-in-chief" for a whole life-campaign.

Subtlety is one of the most marked characteristics of Browning's mind, and it is among the reasons for the obscurity often really present but occasionally only imagined to exist in his works. There are few better examples of this quality than the little poem, *Deaf and Dumb*, that exquisite interpretation, through the force of sympathy, of the meaning of a piece of sculpture:—

"Only the prism's obstruction shows aright
The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its light
Into the jewelled bow from blankest white:
So may a glory from defect arise:
Only by Deafness may the vexed Love wreak
Its insuppressive sense on brow and cheek,
Only by Dumbness adequately speak
As favoured mouth could never, through the eyes."

Youth and Art is interesting for a wholly different reason, teaching that life holds things of higher worth than any art. The end of ambition is attained, and the life is empty: as in Tennyson's *Romney's Remorse*, substance has been sacrificed for shadow.

As usual, however, Browning's favourite and most successful mode of expression is dramatic, and the most remarkable poems of this group are three in which he embodies his ideas of painting and of music in the persons of individual painters and musicians. They are *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Andrea del Sarto* and *Abt Vogler*. *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha* might be added to make the balance even between the two arts; but it is not worthy of a place beside the other three. Neither is *A Toccata of Galuppi's*, which is somewhat overloaded with technicalities—another cause of obscurity. But the soul of music is in *Abt Vogler*. The musician's sense of the *reality* of his work is wonderfully rendered. It is a palace of sound that he rears; and the reaction, the starting of the tears as the palace vanishes away, is followed immediately by the faith that "there shall never be one lost good": what is lost in time will be found again in eternity:—

> "All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist,
> Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
> Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
> When eternity confirms the conception of an hour.
> The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
> The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
> Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
> Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by-and-by."

Fra Lippo Lippi and *Andrea del Sarto* are not written in this high-strung lyrical strain; but what they lose in one way they gain in another. They are intensely dramatic, and the two painters are among the most admirably portrayed of Browning's men. Filippo Lippi is a sensualist, in the main quite contented with his sensualism, yet not without sympathy with things higher, which sometimes get into his work in a way he himself does not understand. Trained in a convent, he yet finds afterwards that all he

knows which is worth the knowing has been drunk in unconsciously during his life in the gutter, before he saw the convent. What he experienced in the street is real to him, and by virtue of it he is enabled afterwards to give life to the lifeless figures of the monkish pictures. Browning's dislike of the monastic abandonment of the world is shown in this poem. Faulty and stained as is the character of Filippo Lippi, he has much of the poet's sympathy—far more than the respectable Bishop Blougram. He has hold of reality and he is at heart sincere. The world which he finds good, is a good thing. When he declares that

> "This world's no blot for us,
> Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good,"

he is speaking the opinion of Browning, as well as his own experience.

Andrea del Sarto is a character of a higher order, and the depth of his fall is proportioned to the height whence he came. While Filippo Lippi has realised the best that was in him, chequered as it is, Andrea has not. He has been unfaithful to his art; he has bartered his gifts for gold and for the semblance of love; and all his life is poisoned by the sense of the wrong he has done his own higher nature. Technically perfect, he can correct the faults even of Raphael,—"but all the play, the insight, and the stretch—out of me, out of me!" He imagines

> "Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
> Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
> For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
> To cover."

But even while he imagines it he knows it to be impossible. He has chosen his reward on earth, and it is earthy. He whose reach does not exceed his grasp has no use for a heaven. The Grammarian is "for the morning" because there is something of the infinite in his aspiration; Andrea, who has not aspired, must rest on the lower slopes.

These two poems deal with the Italian Renascence, and move in it with an easy mastery which shows how far Browning had

advanced since *Sordello*. There was no period of history he knew so well, and somewhere or other in his verse every aspect of it is represented—its art, its learning, its luxury and brilliance and its heartlessness. Andrea and Filippo Lippi are men of their time, and their ambitions and aspirations, their strength and their weakness belong to Italy and to no other country, to the Renascence and to no other period,—always, however, to these as seen by the eyes of a Goth. Another aspect of it is seen in *My Last Duchess*, a perfect picture of cold-blooded heartlessness, a thing possible in any age, though fortunately rare in all ages. But in its circumstances this is indubitably Italian, and unmistakably tinged with the spirit of the Renascence. Again, the mixture of paganism with Christianity in *The Bishop at St Praxed's*, and the Bishop's worldliness and luxuriousness, combined with his sense of the beauty of form and colour and his fine taste in Latinity, are characteristic of the same age. So too in *The Grammarian's Funeral*, the old scholar's zeal in the pursuit of knowledge even in its driest forms and the determination which spurs him on, in spite of sinking frame and failing sense, to settle the "business" of the Greek particles, bespeaks the day when Greek learning was new, and when it seemed to hold out almost limitless promise to the human race.

Mr Beers[1] quotes with obvious dissent the saying of Ruskin that "Robert Browning is unerring in every sentence he writes of the Middle Ages." He dissents, not on the ground that Browning erred, but that he was indifferent and seldom touched upon the Middle Ages at all. And indeed the *dictum* is surprising, unless we suppose that Ruskin extends the term "Middle Ages" a little beyond the ordinary bounds, so as to include at least the early part of the Renascence. The Middle Ages proper make but slight appeal to Browning. To him, chivalry counted for little, and the faith of the Middle Ages perhaps for even less. He has caught a few points. One is their grotesquerie, which is illustrated in *Holy-Cross Day* and *The Heretic's Tragedy*; and perhaps we may reckon the vividness of their faith in a future world as another. If time enters into *Easter Day* at all, it is a poem of the

[1] *History of English Romanticism in the XIX Century*, 277.

poet's own age; but the picture of the day of judgment might have been painted by the brush of a mediæval artist:—

"Sudden there went,
Like horror and astonishment,
A fierce vindictive scribble of red
Quick flame across, as if one said
(The angry scribe of Judgment) 'There—
Burn it!' and straight I was aware
That the whole ribwork round, minute
Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,
Was tinted, each with its own spot
Of burning at the core, till clot
Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire
Over all kitchen, which 'gan suspire
As fan-great measure equable,—
Just so the flamelet conflagrations kill
Night's new head, and rise and sink
Reflected. Now the fire would shrink
And wither off the blasted face
Of heaven, and I distinct might trace
The sharp black ridgy outlines left
Unburned like network—then, each cleft
The fire had been sucked back into
Regorged, and out it surging flew
Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,
Till, tolerating to be tamed
No longer, certain rays world-wide
Shot downwardly."

This is just the picture of the Judgment which the mediæval mind conceived, and here Browning might be said to enter into the spirit of mediævalism. But so much is common knowledge, and if a source were needed he might have got all this through the medium of the Renascence, when it was still the business of the great artists to represent in stone or on canvas the ideas they no longer shared.

Except for such superficial points, Browning has perhaps less of the mediæval spirit than any other poet of his time. He has been called a mystic, but the word hardly fits; and in any case the mysticism with which he sympathises is not of the mediæval sort: it is transcendentalism rather than mysticism. He remains

singularly unmoved by the religious revival, or reaction, which so powerfully influenced the imagination of the Pre-Raphaelites; and large as is the place filled by religion in his verse, there is hardly a piece that is 'catholic' in a sense which would have satisfied Newman or Manning. To them, dogma and authority were essential: to Browning they were an obstruction. Even his Pope is almost as free from them as his Rabbi Ben Ezra: he is universal, but not 'catholic.'

Just as little is Browning attracted by the system of chivalry. We hear little in his verse of tournaments and feats of arms. A deed of heroism or devotion appeals to him no more in the knightly Count Gismond vindicating a lady's honour than in the simple Breton sailor, Hervé Riel, steering the fleet of his country into safety; and if in the former he seeks to stamp the chivalric spirit with his approval, in *The Glove* not reveals one of the absurdities to which it was apt to lead. Where daring had for him only the attraction which he felt towards any form of intense life: he preferred infinitely themes which opened out some problem beyond, like that of *Clive*. And just as he cared little for the warlike side of the spirit of chivalry, so he was indifferent to its amatory aspect. There is nothing in common between the love-poems of Browning and those of the troubadours, and the fantastic devotion of the knights to their ladies was more likely to stir him to contempt than to win his admiration.

Instead, then, of representing Browning as a master of the lore of the Middle Ages, it seems more consistent with the facts to say that no man of his time was more completely free from their influence. This was not due to ignorance; it was rather due to alienation of mind.

Though the death of Mrs Browning led to the migration of the poet back to England, he never ceased to love "the land of lands" as he calls it.

> "What I love best in all the world
> Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
> In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine."

To Italy therefore he finally returned to die; and to Italy, also, he went back for the subject of his next poem after *Dramatis*

Personae. It was *The Ring and the Book* (1868–1869), the longest and the greatest of all, with which closes the second period of his work. During these two decades, from 1850 to 1870, Browning had moved beyond the experimental stage, had discovered what he could best do, and was doing it with powers in the fullest maturity and with experience steadily growing richer. Afterwards, unfortunately, his work is injured, and much of it is almost ruined, by a loss of balance between the artistic and the philosophic elements; and the poet sinks into the preacher of a doctrine.

The plan of *The Ring and the Book* is unique. Theoretically indefensible, its sufficient justification is that practically it succeeds, except in one respect which is in no way essential, and must be set down as Browning's great error of judgment. Each of the ten books regards the same story, from beginning to end, from a different point of view. Superficially, then, the plan seems to involve an intolerable amount of repetition; but in point of fact there is very little. The introductory book tells the story, a knowledge of which is afterwards assumed, so that what we get is not a reiterated narrative of the facts, but the comments of the various speakers upon them. Thus there is really very little action: the whole object of the poem is the revelation of character, with the advantage that it is character elicited in all the different cases by the same set of circumstances. The five great books, *Pompilia*, *Count Guido Franceschini*, *Guido*, *Caponsacchi* and *The Pope* are never wearisome and never seem to repeat. The wearisomeness of the other five (which few, having read them once, will ever read again) is due to the quality of the matter Browning puts into them. His mistake lay in writing them: they are no way essential to his purpose; and it is scarcely credible that they could have been made good poetry; Browning at least has not made them so.

The Ring and the Book, then, is a group of dramatic monologues closely bound together. All the speakers have been concerned in the same events, and they necessarily throw light upon one another. Thus Caponsacchi owes to Pompilia what is virtually a new birth, and in learning to understand her we are helped to understand him. But in most respects the five books are

practically five different poems; and the merit of *The Ring and the Book* lies mainly in the excellence of these five dramatic monologues.

Pompilia is certainly the best of Browning's female characters: her only rival is Pippa, who is altogether a lighter sketch. The triumph is all the more remarkable, because this simple, uneducated girl speaks in the language of Robert Browning. It would be vain to deny that many of her utterances are dramatically out of character. She is endowed with a range of thought and a power of expression we can hardly conceive a girl so bred and trained to have possessed, and thus far Browning falls short of the highest dramatic gift. But the fundamental conception of the character is faultless, and in the beauty of it the reader willingly forgets the poet's failure to adapt his style to her. The development in her nature, brought about by the sense of coming motherhood, is infinitely touching. Hitherto she has been first the simple, harmless, colourless girl, and then the patient, down-trodden wife. Now she suddenly reveals herself the heroine. The Patient Griselda is not a type of character which wins the modern mind; and Browning was the last man to exalt patience without limit and without condition. The moment Pompilia feels that she has another life to protect, her obedience ends. She is defiant of convention, fertile in resource, a possible tigress in defence of her trust. The instinct which turns the tree "away from the north wind with what nest it holds" turns her from all the courses her life has followed hitherto. It is a transformation almost like the change from chrysalis to butterfly; and yet it is so managed that we feel there is no break in the character.

The Pope is perhaps the greatest book of all. The figure of the old Pope has less charm than the picture of the girl-wife, but it has more grandeur. Called upon in extreme old age to pronounce the doom of a fellow-creature, he never hesitates, though he recognises the possibility that, black as the case against Guido looks, there may yet be a mistake. He has done his best; he believes Guido to be guilty; and he sends him to execution. But though in form a dramatic monologue like the other books, and though dramatic in conception too, *The Pope* is in substance the utterance of

Browning himself. It is his philosophy of life that is here embodied; it is his criticisms on the characters that are put into the mouth of the Pope. It could not be otherwise. The Pope is not so much a character as the embodiment of ideal wisdom and justice. The book, therefore, is simply the best that Browning could conceive about life. We have already found the same characteristic in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, and something of the same charm; but, on the whole, the palm of greatness belongs to *The Pope*.

Each of the other books has likewise a beauty and a greatness of its own. The character of Caponsacchi is magnificently drawn. It resembles Pompilia's in the fact that all the grander features are evoked by one great crisis in his life. The call of Pompilia is the turning-point. Hitherto Caponsacchi has been growing "drunk with truth stagnant inside him." Like a great ship in shallow waters he is in danger, while others around him, blessed with "no brains and much faith," ride safe at anchor: what to them is religion is to him a stupid convention. Pompilia calls him out into the deep, to be battered by storms, but through those storms to work out his own salvation, and to win from the old Pope approval only less emphatic than that which he awards to Pompilia.

The two books devoted to Count Guido Franceschini are usually ranked lower than these three; but as intellectual achievements they are quite as great. The character of Guido is one that repels as Iago repels; but as a triumph of dramatic skill it is not unworthy to be named even with Iago. The one book throws light upon the other. In the first, the Count is the polished man of the world, heir to an ancient name, speaking to his judges as to men no more than his equals, and subtly suggesting that they are men who might have stood in his position. In the second book, significantly entitled simply *Guido*, we have the man in his own nature, stripped of all disguise, freed at last from the necessity of that homage which vice pays to virtue. It would be difficult to find a parallel to the appalling realism of the character of Guido, as soon as the last hope is gone. It is the picture of a thoroughly bad man with the fear neither of God nor of man any longer before his eyes; and it is made all the more terrible by the fact that it is

addressed to an audience whom he knows and who know themselves to be no better than he. The scum of a corrupt society is gathered round the papal Court, and of that Guido's judges as well as Guido himself are part. Realism in depicting vice has often been made loathsome; Browning does not make it so, but he makes it fearful.

After the publication of *The Ring and the Book* an unfortunate change came over Browning; and though he wrote vigorously as well as voluminously, very little of his subsequent work rises to a high level as poetry. What ruins it is the over-development of the critical and philosophical spirit to the detriment of the artistic. Most of the poems are conscious and deliberate discussions of problems, ethical or religious. Though, as a rule, the form of the dramatic monologue is preserved, the true dramatic element sinks to a secondary place. Figures like Fra Lippo Lippi, Karshish, Bishop Blougram, Caliban or Caponsacchi are extremely rare. It is usually not the man who wins interest, it is the situation in which he is placed, or the thoughts put into his mouth.

Browning's publications followed fast upon one another in the seventies. *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* and *Balaustion's Adventure* both appeared in 1871, *Fifine at the Fair* in 1872, *Red Cotton Night-cap Country* in 1873, *Aristophanes' Apology* and *The Inn Album* in 1875, *Pacchiarotto* in 1876, *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus* in 1877, *La Saisiaz* and *The Two Poets of Croisic* in 1878, and the two series of *Dramatic Idylls* in 1879 and 1880. The poet had never before been so prolific. But for the reflection that Shakespeare crowded all his work within little more than twenty years, we might be tempted to say that no poet could afford to be so prolific. After the last date there was some slackening of the output; but nevertheless Browning added four more volumes before his death. These were: *Jocoseria* (1883), *Ferishtah's Fancies* (1884), *Parleyings with certain People of Importance* (1887) and *Asolando* (1889). The last volume was published almost simultaneously with the death of the poet.

The translations from the Greek are a remarkable feature of this closing period. Besides *Agamemnon*, we have included in *Balaustion's Adventure* "a transcript from Euripides"—a trans-

lation of *Alcestis*. The original part of the poem is based upon a legend of the influence of Browning's favourite Greek tragedian over the Syracusans, who liberated some of the Athenian captives after the ruin of the great expedition because of their power to recite his verses. The beautiful story is well told by Browning. *Aristophanes' Apology* is a similar mixture of translation and original verse, the translation being again from Euripides, —*Hercules Furens*. As a translator Browning was not successful. The rigidity of his style in the dramatic monologue showed how ill adapted he was to be the mouthpiece of another man's thoughts; and besides, the whole cast of his genius was as widely as possible removed from the Greek. Without being conspicuously romantic, he is certainly anything but classical. The clear-cut outlines, the lucidity, order and symmetry of Greek poetry, remove it poles asunder from the verse of Browning. In his translation, therefore, it is not surprising that he does justice neither to himself nor to his original. He leaves *Agamemnon* hardly less obscure than he found it; and he who is befogged by the Greek had better turn for light to someone other than Browning. The transcripts from Euripides are less irritatingly difficult; but they are no more Euripides than Pope's *Iliad* is Homer. The translations are, it is to be feared, among the evidences of a tendency to capriciousness which abound in this closing period. Browning was never so defiantly original as he was at this time; and with him imitation was akin to virtue.

It is this capriciousness and self-will which vitiates nearly all of Browning's later work. The evil is conspicuous already in *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society*. It seems to be proclaimed in the ungainliness of the title; and a similar clumsiness is repeated more than once afterwards. *Red Cotton Night-cap Country*, and *Parleyings with certain People of Importance in their Day*, are models of what a title ought not to be. In earlier days Browning's titles had been sometimes eccentric; but there is an appropriateness or a beauty, as in *Bells and Pomegranates*, which justifies them; whereas *Red Cotton Night-cap Country* is a mere freak, and no degree of appropriateness can redeem the lumbering *Parleyings*.

If this freakishness were confined to the titles it would matter little; but it permeates the substance and the mode of treatment as well. Browning at all periods displayed a love of the grotesque which not infrequently led him into error. Bagehot showed true critical discrimination when he treated Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning as exemplars respectively of "pure, ornate and grotesque art." The grotesque is a perfectly legitimate form of art; but it is not in itself a high one, and unless it be kept in due subordination it must inevitably lower any work in which it appears. On Browning it gradually grew to the detriment of his poetry until, after *The Ring and the Book*, he seemed to revel in it.

Even more important than this is the change which passes over Browning's method of dealing with character. In earlier years the characters really think their own thoughts and speak and act in accordance with them. It is true they speak in the voice of Browning, but their utterances are, as he declares, "the utterances of so many imaginary personages," not his. Pippa, Pompilia, Caponsacchi, Andrea del Sarto, Karshish, Paracelsus, Cleon, all are beings endowed with characters distinct from the character of the poet; and he represents them dramatically. By their own speech they show what is in them. As a rule it is otherwise in the closing period, in which the poet gradually ceases to be the dramatist and becomes the critic. Though the *dramatis personae* are brought on the stage, they are treated as puppets, not as living beings. In his own words, Browning takes his stand, "motley on back and pointing-pole in hand," to explain the mechanism.

This is in part a reversion to the method of *Sordello*, where he declares himself to be forced by popular prejudice to adopt the narrative form and explain his character, instead of effacing himself and letting the character speak. In his closing period he was certainly under no such necessity. It was as a writer of poems dramatic in principle and mono-dramatic in form that he won his fame. And yet the most striking change in the closing period is the partial abandonment of the principle in many cases, and infidelity to it in others where in appearance it is retained.

Browning rarely adopts the narrative form, but he is constantly critical, explanatory and argumentative. In other words, he obtrudes his own opinions and his own personality in a manner inconsistent with the dramatic principle.

This is often the case even where the dramatic form is preserved. Thus *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* is a poem founded upon the history of Napoleon III, and the speaker ought to represent the character of that singular adventurer. In point of fact he does not. The name Browning has chosen is not more conspicuously unlike anything French than are the sentiments unlike anything which we can reasonably attribute to Napoleon. The personality of Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau is not interesting at all, though his views and arguments are. The situation of the "Saviour of Society" absorbs the poet; the words he puts into the mouth of the Prince are really little more than his own comments upon the situation.

Evidence of this change may be found in plenty in the volumes of miscellaneous poems, and especially in the *Parleyings*. Contrast, for example, *George Bubb Dodington* or *Bernard de Mandeville* with *Cleon* or *Fra Lippo Lippi*. In the earlier poems we have the thoughts of two men, the one on human destiny, the other on art; but the thoughts are carefully adapted to the men and to their times. Cleon is a Greek, and has the interests, ambitions, gifts and prejudices of a Greek. In the face of death he is simply human; for there the differences of age and race are insignificant. Yet he is Greek still in his conception of what is possible or credible with regard to that which lies beyond death. And Fra Lippo, again, has ideas of art which could not be expressed in that way except by Fra Lippo. On the other hand the *Parleyings* are sketches critical of the personages from whom they take their name. We have no character of the statesman George Bubb Dodington in the poem named after him. It is no more a dramatic representation of the man than a sermon on the virtues and sins of King David is a dramatic representation of the King of Israel. So too *Bernard de Mandeville* is nothing more than an argument on the subject of optimism *versus* pessimism. In *Ferishtah's Fancies* we have a collection, not of dramatic mono-

logues, but of parables; the dramatic disguise is almost completely dropped. The dervish Ferishtah himself cannot be taken very seriously, and what he teaches is taught in the Eastern way by apologue.

With only one exception the longer poems of the period (excluding of course the translations) illustrate the same change. *Red Cotton Night-cap Country* is a poem founded upon a true story, and as originally written by Browning it actually contained the real names of the actors, which he obliterated only when he was warned that by introducing them he exposed himself to danger under the law of libel. It is dramatic in so far as it attempts to realise their characters and by their characters to explain the events. But it also contains an important critical element. The poet constantly stops the action to interpose his own comments and explanations. Thus, after Miranda's leap from the tower, the gardener remarks upon his action:—

> "This must be what he meant by those strange words
> While I was weeding larkspurs yesterday,
> 'Angels would take him!' Mad!"

Here the instinct of the dramatist would be to stop. The actor in the scene has made his comment, and no one else has any business there. But Browning goes on:—

> "No! sane, I say.
> Such being the conditions of his life,
> Such end of life was not irrational.
> Hold a belief you only half-believe,
> With all-momentous issues either way,—
> And I advise you imitate this leap,
> Put faith to proof, be cured or killed at once!"

And so it is constantly: the action or the narrative is stopped, the poet appears personally, and tells his readers what is the right thing to think about the incident which has come before them. His opinions may be sound and his guidance valuable, but at any rate his method is not dramatic.

In *Fifine at the Fair* it is even less so than in *Red Cotton Night-cap Country*. In *Fifine* the reader is introduced to three characters, Don Juan, his wife Elvire, and the beautiful but not virtuous gipsy Fifine. In the main the poem is Don Juan's

defence of his own admiration for the gipsy, which has kindled Elvire's jealousy. The issue of the admiration is plainly enough suggested in the name Don Juan. But what concerns us now is the fact that, though the three figures come before us in name, there is no serious attempt to sustain the characters or to make them real by those little touches which alone can give life to the figures of the imagination. Much of the argument of Don Juan proves on examination to be really Browning's own. The poet's favourite ideas are reiterated by Don Juan, mingled, it is true, with threads of sophistry which are not Browning's, but which do not give individuality to Don Juan.

Still farther removed from Browning's former method is *La Saisiaz*, where the veil of dramatic form, as yet preserved in *Fifine*, is dropped, and we have an undisguised dissertation on immortality. The matter of the poem is extremely interesting, and the argument well deserves close study. Whether the discussion be convincing or not, it is at any rate worth knowing what were the reasons which seemed to Browning sufficient to prove the truth of immortality. Unfortunately the value and the interest are philosophic rather than artistic. Unfortunately too it is impossible to express philosophy under artistic forms without damage both to the philosophy and to the art. *La Saisiaz* is neither a great poem nor a great philosophic treatise. The fetters of verse cramp the philosophic thoughts, and the weight of the thought overloads the verse.

This is the fault of nearly all Browning's later work. It was not necessarily a mistake on his part to abandon the dramatic principle either wholly or in part; but if he wished to remain a poet he was bound to adopt instead of it some other principle within the sphere of art. But in proportion as he casts off the dramatic form he also casts off art and assumes philosophy. Throughout the whole of his career he was emphatically a philosophical poet; but throughout two-thirds of it he was first poet and only in the second place philosopher. To say nothing of the love-poems, *Saul* and *The Lost Leader* and *The Flight of the Duchess* and *Childe Roland* are wholly poetic in conception and execution. So, essentially, are *Paracelsus* and *The Pope*, though

they are loaded with thought. This is not the case with *Fifine at the Fair* or with *La Saisiaz*. The numerous passages of rare poetic beauty in both of them are subordinate to the general conception, which is argumentative in its nature. This fact makes it doubtful whether much of Browning's later verse will long survive. Forcible as is the thought, few will read it for its philosophic merits; and the purple patches of poetry will not induce readers who love poetry and are careless of philosophy to go through the toil necessary to discover that which they seek. There is no example in literature of a versified philosophic treatise which has really lived. Perhaps the nearest approach to such a thing is the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius; and this has been saved because its magnificent poetry outweighs its philosophy. Wordsworth's *Excursion*, noble as it is in its finer parts, is neglected by many readers because of the dreary flats which must be traversed in order to reach the heights of poetry. So, but in a more pronounced degree, will it be with *La Saisiaz* and *Fifine at the Fair*. They will be quoted and referred to by militant Browningites; but they will seldom be read by lovers of poetry who have no thesis to defend.

Among the shorter poems of the closing period there are a considerable number of exceptions to which this judgment does not apply. Thus *Clive*, with its vivid presentation of the situation after the pistol is fired, is as full of poetic insight and power as any of Browning's earlier pieces, though it is not equally poetic in style. *Cristina and Monaldeschi* is worthy to rank with his most dramatic pieces. *Numpholeptos* is wholly poetic in conception; and, on a lower plane, *Hervé Riel* is a fine specimen of a heroic ballad. Nevertheless these pieces are exceptions; and in a large majority even of the shorter poems the poet is merged in the philosopher.

Among the longer poems there is only one, *The Inn Album*, to which the criticism does not more or less completely apply. *The Inn Album* is the great triumph of Browning's later career, a poem in which he nearly rivals the glory of *Paracelsus* and *The Ring and the Book*. And it is noticeable that when inspiration comes back to him again in full flood he reverts to the old

dramatic method. There is no comment and there is very little narrative. The characters are brought upon the stage, speak their own thoughts and make their own impression. The reader receives no extraneous assistance in interpreting them, and he needs none; for in each case the conception of the character is clear and strong. Few poems of equal merit have received so scanty a meed of praise as *The Inn Album*. The story, it is said, is unpleasant; but so is that of *Othello*, and yet the world would be appreciably the poorer if Shakespeare had shrunk from handling it. No one can say that Browning's poem tends to immorality; nor can it be pretended that the unpleasantness is needlessly dragged in. It is of the very essence. The splendid heroine's character is what it is by reason of the treachery that has been practised upon her; she is one of those who have been "made perfect through suffering." Her capacity for love is unsurpassed even in Browning:—

> "I have danced through day
> On tiptoe at the music of a word,
> Have wondered where was darkness gone as night
> Burst out in stars at brilliance of a smile!
> Lonely, I placed the chair to help me seat
> Your fancied presence; in companionship
> I kept my finger constant to your glove
> Glued to my breast; then—where was all the world?
> I schemed—not dreamed—how I might die some death
> Should save your finger aching."

There is a ring of Shakespeare in the magnificent hyperbole, and we have to go back to *Romeo and Juliet* for the parallel. But the conception of the effect which her seducer's trickery produces upon the heroine's mind is all Browning's own. Suddenly she wakens from her dream, not to abase herself before a conventional standard of purity and goodness, but to realise how immeasurably she towers above the brute whom her imagination has transfigured into a god. In her scornful rejection of his advances when at last he becomes conscious that he has played the fool as well as the knave, there is something of the spirit of Richardson's Clarissa when she too with a noble instinct rejects the awakened Lovelace's suit to make "an honest woman" of her whom he has

wronged but never seduced. Except in this point Browning's heroine is wholly original. Her career after her betrayal is full of interest. It gives occasion to the most scathing criticism ever penned of the vulgar doctrine of hell—vulgar always, though it was taught then by many who were far from being themselves vulgar. The effect of these experiences upon the woman is vividly brought before us in the words of her friend when they meet after her sudden disappearance:—

> "What an angelic mystery you are—
> Now—that is certain! when I knew you first,
> No break of halo and no bud of wing!
> I thought I knew you, saw you, round and through,
> Like a glass ball; suddenly, four years since,
> You vanished, how and whither? Mystery!
> Wherefore? No mystery at all: you loved,
> Were loved again, and left the world of course:
> Who would not? Lapped four years in fairyland,
> Out comes, by no less wonderful a chance,
> The changeling, touched athwart her trellised bliss
> Of blush-rose bower by just the old friend's voice
> That's now struck dumb at her own potency."

A false interpretation is put upon the mysterious disappearance, and consequently a false cause is assigned to the "angelic mystery." Not love and pity, but a grievous wrong and a bitter sorrow, have caused the halo to break and the wing to bud. But though reason is at fault in assigning the cause, observation accurately notes the effect: the halo and the wing are really there.

The contrast between this noble poem and the other writings of Browning after *The Ring and the Book* is the most convincing proof of the wisdom of the artist when he keeps within the limits and faithfully follows the method of his art. In the other pieces there is always something to pardon, because the poet is attempting a task which need not necessarily be done in verse, and which might perhaps be better done in prose. In *The Inn Album* there is nothing to pardon but much to praise, because what he attempts, if it could be done at all in prose, could certainly not be done as well as he does it in verse.

There is no nineteenth-century poet of the first rank whose

ultimate position in the hierarchy is so doubtful as Browning's. He is at once astonishingly great and astonishingly faulty; and only time can determine how far the faults will blur and obscure the greatness. On the one hand, in his finest pieces he sweeps the reader away with him as Tennyson rarely does; and he is incomparably more original in thought. On the other hand, for every sin against art which specks the pages of Tennyson, a hundred blot those of Browning; and his very originality leads him into those irritating eccentricities to which reference has already been made. His style and rhythm are often intolerably rough and unmusical. He is full of strained expressions, irritating puns, harsh inversions. He has a provoking and really meaningless habit of clipping the particles,—"as we curtail the already cur-tailed cur." Worst of all, perhaps, is his inability to select the essential and to reject the unimportant. He pours out the whole farrago of his thoughts, and sometimes does not take the trouble to set them in order. This is the meaning of the charge of verbosity which has been brought against him. He is not verbose in the sense that he takes many words to express a given idea: on the contrary, he is often condensed even to a fault. But he is verbose in the sense that he gives expression to many thoughts when a few would suffice: the total effect might be produced in less space than he takes. A conspicuous example is *The Ring and the Book*, one half of which adds nothing that is of the slightest importance. Browning is in danger, therefore, of being smothered by his own luxuriance. No one who carefully observes what has lived and what has failed to live in past literature will dispute that faults such as these are a dangerous burden for the back of any author. The world is busy, and it will read short books in preference to long ones. *The Ring and the Book* would stand a better chance of being remembered if it extended only to 10,000 lines, instead of containing more than 20,000. Happily, in this case each reader may easily make the reduction for himself; but there are numerous other instances in which the weeding out is less easily performed.

Again, the needless harshness and obscurity of Browning will

tell seriously against him. The poets who have melody, who are lucid in expression, who have classical finish, are sure to find readers. Virgil and Milton are perennial. Imperial Rome has passed away, but the *Aeneid* remains. No one will turn to the *Georgics* now for instruction in agriculture; but the verse evoked by the statesmanship of Maecenas has long survived the statesman and his purpose. Milton's Puritan theology is obsolete; but the majestic lines of *Paradise Lost* live, not because but in spite of it. Tennyson in a less degree has the same assurance of vitality. He is not the equal of Vergil or of Milton, and he carries seeds of decay from which they are free; but he belongs to their corps. Pope is a lesser poet than Tennyson. A century ago the tide set strongly against him; half a century ago he seemed well on the way to oblivion. But his faith in the merit of expressing old thoughts better than they have ever been expressed has been justified: he refuses to be forgotten: we still quote "willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike"; "true art is nature to advantage drest"; "die of a rose in aromatic pain"; "means not, but blunders round about a meaning"; "the right divine of kings to govern wrong": we read more than our fathers did the polished couplets of the *Essay on Man*, the *Essay on Criticism* and the *Moral Essays*.

Now Browning is in this the antithesis to Pope. He is careful of the thought, but careless of the expression. It seems the wise and right and manly choice—that is, if for any reason it be impossible to make both perfect. Yet it is questionable whether it is the choice which makes for permanence of fame. Aristotle has survived for two thousand years without a style at all; but the examples are rare indeed of such survival. Browning has many poems in which beauty of style is conjoined with profundity of thought, and in these poems lies the hope for the permanence of his fame. But he drags in his train a most dangerous mass of impedimenta. Probably no greater service could be done to his memory than to disencumber him of it and to make a selection of his best poems such as Arnold made for Wordsworth.

CHAPTER VI

THE TURN OF THE CENTURY: NEW INFLUENCES

THE middle of the nineteenth century has been called "the English Renascence." There is a touch of grandiloquence in the comparison suggested with the great new birth of modern Europe; but if we do not push the parallel too far, something may be said for the phrase. Both in art and in literature it was a time of movement and of great productiveness. If we contrast the date we have now reached with the period twenty years before, the change seems extraordinary. Then, the men of established reputation were all old; and though a few might prophesy great things of a young man named Macaulay and a young man named Carlyle, it could not be pretended that either of the two had yet *done* great things. Twenty years later, Tennyson and Browning, Carlyle, Macaulay, Mill, Ruskin, Thackeray, Dickens and Charlotte Brontë had all accomplished work which the world would not willingly lose, and all gave promise of much admirable work still to come.

But the time was even more remarkable for the appearance of new poets than for the performances of their elder brethren. Within three years on one side or the other of 1850 we encounter the first publications of no fewer than seven poets, the least of whom even an unfavourable critic must admit to be considerable. They are Edward FitzGerald, Matthew Arnold, Arthur Hugh Clough, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his sister Christina Rossetti, Sydney Dobell and Alexander Smith. The last two have received a nickname which will cling to them: they are the Spasmodic

Poets. Rossetti was the intellectual chief of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, several of whom were men of letters as well as artists. The kinship between Clough and Arnold has been generally recognised, and for reasons sufficiently obvious they may be denominated the poets of the Sceptical Reaction. Edward FitzGerald stands apart, unlike all the others, yet at one point in contact with the Oxford poets. The question which has now to be asked is, What did these new poets stand for? What did they add to the forces which were then moulding literature?

The poetry of these men derives its flavour principally from religion, art and the sentiment of nationality. Science enters too, but mainly in an indirect way. It helps to mould the plan of Dobell's *Balder*, and it is at the background of the thought of Clough and Arnold, though neither of these poets shows the degree and kind of interest which we find in Tennyson. As regards religion, two of the three groups are intimately related, in the one case positively, in the other negatively, to the Oxford Movement; and it may be noted that the relation is negative where the knowledge is deepest, and where the contact has been closest. It will be necessary hereafter to examine the nature of this relation at some length: here it must suffice to note that in the Pre-Raphaelite group the artistic preponderated over the religious element.

One peculiarity of the Pre-Raphaelite group, which indicates the preponderance of art, is the close relation in which we find poetry and painting. Rossetti is the most conspicuous, but he is by no means the only example of this union. In his case the relation was so close, and the balance was held so even, that it is still doubtful in which art he is to be regarded as greatest; and one of his critics has said that it will always be a question whether Rossetti "had not better have painted his poems and written his pictures; there is so much that is purely sensuous in the former, and so much that is intellectual in the latter." But we find this union in William Bell Scott, in Thomas Woolner and in Sir J. Noel Paton as well as in Rossetti; and it may be said, not only of all the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, but generally of those who sympathised with them, that if they did not

themselves attempt both arts, they had a marked and unusual sympathy with both. And this spirit was transmitted from the founders of the brotherhood to the younger generation, William Morris and Burne-Jones, who took up their work.

Still more closely related to the history of the time was the manifestation in verse of the spirit of nationality. Attention has already been called[1] to certain premonitory symptoms of this spirit. But although it had long been operative beneath the surface, it was not till near the middle of the century that the sense of nationality emerged into clear consciousness and became a force in practical politics. This it is which makes that period momentous in history. The events of 1848 shook every throne in Europe. Everywhere the people rose in insurrection against tyrants. The system established in 1815 was shattered. Then, the nations seemed to have fought "to make one submit"; now, they gave grim earnest of their determination "to teach all kings true sovereignty." The immediate consequences were chequered. In France, Hungary, Poland, Germany, Spain, Italy, the revolutionary movements were either not outwardly successful at all, or were successful only for the moment; but everywhere the actual result was profoundly important. Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism and the party of the Italian Irredentists are all living forces, and all owe their vitality to this sentiment of nationality. To deal with this sentiment was the great task of the statesmen of that age. They all felt the gravity of the task, but few of them comprehended its real character. Many years passed before Gladstone understood the real significance of the help he gave to nascent Italy. Cavour, almost alone among the practical statesmen, seems to have seen clearly what was taking place.

England, with a widely different history behind her, had a far less menacing situation to face. There, for centuries, freedom had been slowly broadening down; and within the generation then living the rising democracy had won several great triumphs. Thus, although there were minor revolutionary movements in England too, the general sense of the people was that what other nations were trying to do by violence could in England be accomplished

[1] Part I. Chapter III.

by peaceful means. But nevertheless the nation was profoundly moved, both on account of its own state, and in the cause of other peoples. That cause was kept in the most literal sense before the eyes of Englishmen; for England was the common refuge of all the political exiles of the Continent, and of hundreds of political schemers who, if not in overt hostility against their native governments, feared those governments too much to stay at home. Carlyle remembered the "stately tragic figures" of the Spanish political refugees perambulating the broad pavements of Euston Square when he first knew London. The house of Gabriele Rossetti, himself a political refugee, was thronged with fellow-exiles; and Mr W. M. Rossetti thinks that his brother Dante's "marked alienation from current politics" may have been due to reaction from the talk of these Italian revolutionaries. To London they flocked, Spaniards, Italians, Hungarians, Frenchmen,—Kossuth and Mazzini and Louis Napoleon, with hundreds of inferior fame, or of no fame at all.

The tendency towards political and patriotic verse, natural enough under such circumstances, was soon strengthened by events affecting England herself. The Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny gave specific meaning to the vague national ardours already permeating the air. The war with Russia was the more important because it was the end of a long peace, so far as the great European powers were concerned. The poets' response was immediate and emphatic. Tennyson's *Maud*, Gerald Massey's *War Waits*, Sydney Dobell and Alexander Smith's *Sonnets on the War*, and *England in time of War* by the former alone, E. C. Jones's *The Waves and the War*, and Henry and Franklin Lushington's *La Nation Boutiquière* and *Points of War*, all breathe the same influence. In this department of patriotic verse the first place for persistency, though not for excellence, must be assigned to Gerald Massey (1828–1907), a man whose name should be remembered were it only for the courage with which he fought and conquered difficulties. As the original of George Eliot's Felix Holt, and as the associate of Maurice and Kingsley in the scheme of Christian Socialism, he has other claims to remembrance. It is astonishing that he, who was in childhood one of the victims of

the unreformed factory system, should have been able to produce a volume of verse as early as 1850. The cream of his earlier work, with new poems added, was collected in *My Lyrical Life* (1889). In the latter part of his life he was diverted from poetry by other interests. His patriotic pieces are fervid and stirring, but a comparison with Tennyson shows that they fall considerably below excellence.

In the poetry thus inspired by political and national conceptions it is easy to distinguish two predominant strains. One is the strain of an insular patriotism, a sentiment centred in England and inspired by her. The other is the pæan or the dirge, as the case may be, of that great uprising of the nations which had just been convulsing Europe. Of the former the examples are innumerable. It is the animating principle of the volumes above mentioned; but by far the most consummate expression was given to it by Tennyson. His patriotic poems are divisible into two classes, the first political, the second military; while the great Wellington *Ode* holds an intermediate position and combines the two.

The political strain is present in Tennyson from the first. The three poems of 1842, "You ask me why, tho' ill at ease," "Of old sat Freedom on the height," and "Love thou thy land," are examples. They are the utterance of an English patriot; but the chief ground upon which they glorify England is the great services she has rendered to the cause of freedom. In the stanzas on *England and America in* 1782 the poet prophesies that

> "The single note
> From that deep chord which Hampden smote
> Will vibrate to the doom";

and he rejoices that the strong sons of the "strong mother of a lion line," for once unfaithful to her true cause, have "wrenched their rights" from her. *The Third of February*, 1852, gives Tennyson's conception of the political *rôle* of England in Europe. The *coup d'état* had been struck two months before; and Tennyson, like other lovers of political honesty and friends of freedom, was horrified, and filled, not with fear, but with anxiety. The blow seemed to be the triumph of all that was unprincipled

in politics; and the poet, believing the danger to be by no means confined to France, condemns the tone of the English parliament as beneath that which was befitting the people

> "Whom the roar of Hougomont
> Left mightiest of all peoples under heaven."

He resented the attempts made in the House of Lords to restrain and to moderate the attacks of the press upon Louis Napoleon, and insisted that the very greatness of Britain laid upon her the duty of plain speech:—

> "No little German state are we,
> But the one voice of Europe: we *must* speak."

Even ruin and destruction would be preferable to dodging and paltering with public crime.

> "Better the waste Atlantic roll'd
> On her and us and ours for evermore,"

than that "our Britain" should "salve a tyrant o'er."

The patriotism of Tennyson, then, is by no means selfish or ignoble; but it is distinctly insular.

> "God bless the narrow seas!
> I wish they were a whole Atlantic broad,"

exclaims "the Tory member's eldest son" in *The Princess*, as he looks towards the coast of France and thinks how everything there is unstable, while in England progress is sure and steady. The same spirit manifests itself again in *In Memoriam*. Though it seems hardly germane to the matter, we have there too the contrast between "freedom in her regal seat of England," and "the schoolboy heat, The blind hysterics of the Celt."

The more distinctively warlike note in Tennyson's verse is a later development. The lines on the two great Balaclava charges have been mentioned elsewhere. The ballad of *The Revenge*, *The Defence of Lucknow* and several other pieces are similarly inspired. Probably nothing will ever dethrone *Ye Mariners of England* from its pride of place among poems of the navy; but next to it comes the ballad of *The Revenge*. And increasingly, as years went on, the poet showed a tendency to make himself the spokesman of

army and navy. Nothing was more sure to rouse him than any threat of invasion, any question of the sufficiency of the fleet, any doubt whether the forces on which the safety of the nation depended were being made the playthings of party.

But of all occasions Tennyson ever found for the expression of his patriotic sentiment, that of which he made the grandest use was the death of Wellington. The *Ode* is something more than a piece of glorious eloquence. It is, as to its form, a triumph of skill in lyrical verse, and, as to its substance, a masterly analysis of character. There are more subtle melodies elsewhere among Tennyson's lyrics; but nowhere in verse is there a more skilful and sustained adaptation of sound to sense. The "roll of muffled drums," the tramp of the great procession, sorrowful yet proud, the thunder of cannon, the crash of the charge, are all heard in the verse. The opening is solemn and mournful; then the note of pride rings out as the triumphs of the great soldier surge up in memory; and that, in turn gives place, as "the black earth yawns, the mortal disappears," to the feeling of the insignificance of man before his Maker. With all this is woven in the great study of Wellington's character. The phrases have passed into common speech—"rich in saving common-sense," "four-square to all the winds that blew," "one that sought but Duty's iron crown." In respect of the quotations it has furnished, the *Ode* will almost bear comparison with Gray's great *Elegy*. And the phrases have not only that terseness and point and fulness of meaning which recommends them for quotation, but they have also the merit of truth. The most careful and conscientious historian could not have chosen more skilfully the characteristics which made Wellington what he was.

The loving care with which Tennyson elaborated this great character was due not only to his profound admiration for the Iron Duke, but also to the fact that he found in him the type of the English race, if a great Irishman may without offence be said to be typical of the English race in the widest sense of the phrase. His moderation, his "long-enduring blood," his single-minded devotion, his wealth of "saving common-sense," all, in the eyes of the poet, are qualities of the race as well as of its greatest

representative in that age. Carlyle pronounced his countrymen inarticulate. So is Wellington. Too busy to talk much, he lets "the turbid stream of rumour flow," and when he does utter his thoughts it is after the manner of the equally inarticulate Cromwell, in "language rife with rugged maxims hewn from life." His very warfare bears the same stamp, and is likewise the reflection of the character of the race; for its characteristic is the stubborn standing at bay at Torres Vedras, or the long resistance to assault on the "day of onsets of despair" at Waterloo. And yet there is another side, of which also account must be taken for the nation as well as for the man. He who "greatly stood at bay" at Torres Vedras was also

> "He that far away
> Against the myriads of Assaye
> Clashed with his fiery few and won."

The fiery daring is present as well as the iron tenacity, the headlong spirit which stakes all on a moment as well as the patient resolution which labours in the hope of a distant future.

In the patriotic verse of contemporary poets there is little that is worthy of comparison with the patriotic verse of Tennyson; but about the middle of the century a sentiment spreads to which nothing in Tennyson corresponds. It is the love of liberty irrespective of country or race, the sentiment which swept away Coleridge and Wordsworth in the early days of the French Revolution, and which inspired Byron and Shelley after them. To it the distinction between Celt and Saxon is unimportant, and political boundaries are of interest only when an unwilling people is held in subjection by one more powerful. Mrs Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows* embodies this sentiment, but its principal exponent was Sydney Dobell. It is very evidently the outcome of the political events which were then convulsing continental Europe.

§ 1. *The Poets of the Sceptical Reaction.*

It is curious that in the year 1850 both Tennyson and Browning produced poems in which the religious element is more prominent than it is in anything they had previously written. These great poets had been formed under other influences; but now the crop of Newmanism too was ripe, and the nature of it soon became apparent. As has been said, one of the groups of new poets was related negatively and the other positively to Tractarianism; and as Oxford was the home of Tractarianism, so too it was the home of that poetry which expresses the intellectual revolt against all that the *Tracts* specially sought to inculcate. The reaction came with extreme rapidity. Before Tractarianism had grown to maturity, the seeds of opposition were already sown. An exaggerated mediævalism was met by a revived classicism; faith scarcely distinguishable from credulity gave birth to doubt; immoderate claims for the principle of authority were met by an examination of that principle far more thoroughgoing than that which was sanctioned by orthodox Protestantism.

It is not in professional theologians, nor in the arguments advanced on either side in affairs like the Hampden controversy, that this reaction is most clearly manifested. In such professional controversies the Tractarians were the innovators. But we see the influence in the spirit imparted to the University. Young men of intellect and power are ranged in hostile camps: on the banners of the one army are inscribed the words, Authority of the Church, on that of the other, Liberty of Thought. But if faith is deepened on the one side, so is scepticism on the other. The 'liberalism' which horrified Newman in the Noetics might pass for peaceful orthodoxy compared with that to which their successors of a generation later advanced.

In part this was the necessary result of time. The liberals could not have stood permanently in the position of Whately and Thomas Arnold; for the liberal, whether in politics or in the affairs of intellect, cannot consistently be stationary: it is an article of his creed that no one can be stationary,—*non progredi est regredi*. But in the case before us the process was hastened by

the character and claims of the opposite party; and probably some individuals reached a point at which, but for their opponents, they never would have arrived. The extreme forms in which the case for authority was put, and above all the sophistical character of many of the arguments of the Tractarians, were harmful to their cause. The intellect of Oxford in the generation after Newman recoiled. Stanley, Pattison and Jowett, Froude, Ruskin, Clough and Matthew Arnold, men born from twelve to twenty-one years after Newman, were all ultimately opponents of the Newmanite movement, though most of them had for a time felt its attraction.

The sceptical reaction was in no small measure the outcome of the teaching of Thomas Arnold; and that particular phase of it with which we are at present concerned was peculiarly his work. Its two great poets were one of them his son and the other a favourite pupil; and the characters of both were moulded by him. But Thomas Arnold's relation to Newmanism was by no means as simple as at the first glance it appears. He was himself irreconcilably hostile to the movement, and he said and wrote some exceedingly strong things against it; yet Bagehot in his essay on Clough has a profoundly true remark, that, in spite of this hostility, Arnold prepared men for Newmanism. It was not the Rugby men who stood in bitterest opposition to the Tractarians. Ultimately, the leaders of the opposition arose from among them; but they were never bitter, never unsympathetic; and the deepest tones in the poetry both of Clough and of Matthew Arnold are struck by just this emotional sympathy with a creed which their intellect compels them to reject.

The whole weight of Thomas Arnold's influence at Rugby was thrown into the scale of religion, the whole spirit of his teaching was religious. He himself held contentedly and with complete sincerity the position of a liberal Protestant of the Church of England. But, as has just been said, the very soul of liberalism is movement; and it was natural that the son and the pupil should feel impelled to advance beyond the father and the master. Yet to advance farther was to encounter questions apparently going to the very root of Christianity; and it was

natural enough that they who valued Christianity should consider anxiously the possibility of retracing their steps, rather than advancing into the unknown, chill, forbidding land of doubt. Such, probably, was the secret of the attraction of Newmanism for some of the pupils of Thomas Arnold. But though the attraction was natural, so too was the decision to withstand it; for Thomas Arnold had taught above all things devotion to the truth; and the credentials of Newmanism, when examined with a single eye to that, proved unsatisfactory.

Clough and Arnold are leaders of an intellectual revolt, and the basis of their poetry is intellectual. They come therefore as a reinforcement to Tennyson and Browning, who had already done much towards setting poetry on a foundation intellectually sound. They make a partial reversion to the eighteenth century, of the spirit of which they have a larger share than any other English poets of the last hundred years. And it is for this reason that their sympathy with Tractarianism is peculiarly important. Their originality lies mainly in the combination. But for it, their intellectuality might have resembled closely that of Pope. But for the colours reflected from the Tractarian mysticism, but for the wistfulness due to a faith longed for but not attained, Matthew Arnold's classicism would have been far more like that of the Queen Anne writers. The peculiar interest of the Oxford poets lies in the fact that they exhibit with greater clearness and in closer conjunction than any others of the time the marks of those two great forces which, more than all else, made the literature of the nineteenth century—rationalism and the Catholic reaction. Their age, their previous training, their position in Oxford, all concurred in producing a unique combination. To these circumstances is due the fact that, while they illustrate the reaction against the Catholic reaction, they are what they are by reason of it.

Their training and their predilections led the two poets naturally and necessarily to lay stress upon knowledge; and in the end this naturally and necessarily set them in opposition to Tractarianism. For a system which rests upon authority can never heartily and sincerely welcome the new lights which are apt to reveal all too clearly the nature of its claims. And so we find

that one of the shrewdest observers of the time, Mark Pattison, points out in his *Memoirs* that one of the effects of Tractarianism was to cause a decline in the interest in knowledge at Oxford. Here was a ground of difference which was bound sooner or later to alienate the Rugby men, whose central principle, from first to last, was love of knowledge and reverence for truth, wheresoever and among whomsoever discovered. "Now, and for us," says Matthew Arnold, "it is time to Hellenise, and to praise knowing, for we have Hebraised too much, and have over-valued doing[1]." And again, "The English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative power, did not know enough[2]." So far, we seem to be in the sphere of the eighteenth century, which certainly endeavoured to know. But Arnold went farther. "The poetry of later paganism lived by the senses and understanding; the poetry of mediæval Christianity lived by the heart and imagination. But the main element of the modern spirit's life is neither the senses and understanding nor the heart and imagination; it is the imaginative reason[3]." Here we have the note of the nineteenth century, the contribution of German philosophy; and in this blend we have the special characteristic of Arnold, as well as, in a less degree, that of his schoolfellow and friend.

Arthur Hugh Clough (1819–1861), who was born at Liverpool, was at the age of four carried by his parents across the Atlantic to Charleston. Five years later he was brought back to England, and then, after a short time at Chester, he became a pupil of Arnold of Rugby. In 1837 he entered Oxford as a scholar of Balliol; but in the degree list he sank to the second class. The conjecture that he and his friend Arnold, who took the same position, owed their disappointment to the unsettlement and restlessness begotten of theological controversy, is probably well founded as regards Clough; but in Arnold's case the simpler explanation of idleness seems to be sufficient; at least it satisfied contemporaries. Unquestionably Clough was influenced by the controversies. One of his closest friends was W. G. Ward, and

[1] *Culture and Anarchy.* [2] *Essays in Criticism*, 1st series.
[3] *ibid.*

whoever associated much with him must necessarily be in the whirl of the movement. Clough himself "said afterwards that for two years he had been 'like a straw drawn up the draught of a chimney[1].'" But his native strength of intellect and the principles instilled by Dr Arnold ultimately triumphed over such influences; and the most beautiful verses he ever wrote, *Qua Cursum Ventus*, touchingly mark the close of his friendship with Ward, and the final abandonment of the hope to find intellectual satisfaction as well as rest in a past which was irrevocably gone.

Notwithstanding his second class, Clough had been elected a fellow and afterwards a tutor of Oriel College; but in 1848 he resigned first his tutorship and afterwards his fellowship. In doing so he made a great sacrifice; for he was poor, and it was by no means certain that his talents, great as they were, would bring him an income. The principal cause which led Clough to this action was his feeling on questions of religion. He was aware that his position as fellow and tutor gave him the appearance of believing many things which he did not believe, and he could not bear the seeming want of candour. If he was overscrupulous, he at least erred on the side of honour. "The letter of the law," he writes to a friend, "is a very good thing, as the spirit is apt to vary with interpreters, but what is written is written[2]." A lofty moral tone was the very essence of his being; it pervades all his work; and he had no patience with the plea that genius somehow palliates looseness of living or of writing. "The name of Voltaire coming to be discussed," writes Mr Thomas Arnold[3], "my brother said, with a wave of his hand, 'as to the coarseness or sensuality of some of his writings, that is a matter to which I attach little importance.' Clough bluntly replied, 'Well, you don't think any better of yourself for that, I suppose.'" In after years, and doubtless in his heart then, Arnold was at one with Clough; for no one has insisted more eloquently than he upon the imperative need of moral soundness to literature.

The Oxford world expected from Clough some sort of theological manifesto to explain his position and his reasons for

[1] *Poems and Prose Remains*, 14. [2] *Memoir*, 71.
[3] *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1898.

resigning his fellowship; but Clough was a man of humour and took pleasure in depicting to himself the surprise of friends, acquaintances and opponents on reading *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* (1848), which was written after he had quitted Oxford and just before the formal resignation of his fellowship. This "long vacation pastoral" is full of mirth and jest and high spirits, not at all like the utterance of a man drowned in care and sinking under a load of "doubts and obstinate questionings." There has been some controversy as to whether Clough did or did not "break away," as Dean Stanley asserted that he did, "from the University and the Church with the delight of one who had known more than other men the weight of the yoke which ecclesiastical authority had once laid upon him." Clough's letters afford conclusive proof that Stanley was right. "Will you hire yourself out as a common labourer?" he writes to Thomas Arnold. "I hope not; but one may do worse, undoubtedly; 'tis at any rate honester than being a teacher of XXXIX Articles. I rejoice to see before me the end of my servitude, yea, even as the weary foot-traveller rejoices at the sight of his evening hostelry, though there still lies a length of dusty road between." And even if this evidence were absent, the tone of the *Bothie* is hardly less conclusive. It is just the work which would naturally come from the enfranchised prisoner rejoicing in his liberty. Instead of an 'apologia,' or an 'explanation,' or a treatise on apostolical succession, Clough sang a pæan on his recovery of freedom. It was not what the Oxford world expected; but it was the natural reaction from the strain Clough had endured there.

The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich was not Clough's first poem, for the contents of *Ambarvalia*, though not published till the year after the *Bothie*, had been earlier written. But the latter was his first long poem, the first which gave the world the means of judging what manner of man he was. And it still remains that which gives the most comprehensive view of his character and powers. It is mirthful, as becomes the humourist. But under the frolic and jest there lies a deep seriousness; and Clough was essentially serious. He felt, like all the thoughtful men of the time, the urgency of the social problems which were pressing

for solution; and the *Bothie* is full of these problems. He felt that there was something amiss in the position of women; and the *Bothie* treats the question more tastefully, more profoundly and more wisely than Tennyson had treated it in *The Princess* the year before. But that which gives its greatest charm to the *Bothie* is the feeling for nature which it displays. Without apparent effort, insensibly, naturally, Clough imbues the mind with the spirit of Highland scenery. He seldom sets himself deliberately to make a description, and the reader is grateful for his forbearance; but a few apposite words, just what are needed for the purpose of the narrative, make the scene visible.

On the other hand, perhaps the worst feature of the *Bothie* is its metre. Clough chose the hexameter; and, though it has the serious disadvantage of being an exotic form of metre, it is in many ways well adapted for a poem such as he was meditating. It can be either rapid or slow, solemn or light. It was also unhackneyed; and this consideration weighed with him in the selection, as it doubtless weighed with other poets of that day. Longfellow's *Evangeline* and *The Courtship of Miles Standish* and Kingsley's *Andromeda* are all written in this measure. Clough himself used it again in *Amours de Voyage*. In a sense therefore it may be said to be naturalised; but it cannot be pretended that, even in the best English examples, it produces the effect of the Greek or Latin hexameter. Of the three poets named, Kingsley is the most skilful and successful in his use of the metre; but in his verse as well as in that of Longfellow and of Clough, there is an undue preponderance of the dactyl. In Clough's case, however, a more serious objection is the extreme harshness of the verse. Verse ought always to have a more smooth and pleasing melody than prose, while many of Clough's lines read like prose spoilt.

Clough had been invited to become head of University Hall, London, whose function was to provide a place of residence for students of University College. The interval between the date of the invitation and that of Clough's entry upon his duties, he spent in Italy. He was in Rome during its siege by the French in 1849.

In this situation he wrote *Amours de Voyage*[1], which, however, was not published till 1858, when it appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*. The reason for the delay appears to have been the unfavourable opinion of a friend to whom the poem was submitted. There was some reason for this friend's doubts. *Amours de Voyage* is on a considerably lower plane than the *Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*; and it is dangerous for any poet, but especially for one whose reputation is not yet established, to fall below himself. *Amours de Voyage* is a romance in verse, told in a series of letters. The hero, Claude, is emphatically a character of the nineteenth century, a Hamlet in respect of incapacity to carry out his purpose—but not much farther. He seems to have been designed by Clough to embody his conception of the spirit of the age—the paralysis of action through doubt, the lack of purpose, the superficiality. But Claude is too slight and trivial, and in consequence Clough misses his aim.

In 1850 Clough visited Venice, and there he began his most ambitious poem, *Dipsychus*, which, however, was not published during the author's lifetime, and must not be regarded as having received his final touches. The purpose is to depict a spirit divided against itself in its battlings with good and evil, pleasure and pain, faith and doubt, and all the most complex problems of life. The design was great, and in some points it is not unworthily handled. But still it was beyond Clough's powers; and, moreover, the resemblance to Goethe's *Faust* was too close. Though Dipsychus and his attendant Spirit are by no means identical with Faust and Mephistopheles, they are constantly suggesting Goethe's pair. Clough made a grave mistake in courting the comparison. It was a mistake into which he was tempted by similarity of circumstance. Half a century of experience after Goethe's great work—the years during which the lessons of the French Revolution had sunk into the general heart—had brought minds of a rank considerably below Goethe's much where he had stood. The middle of the nineteenth century was consequently the time of his maximum influence. No one else, perhaps, has followed him so closely as

[1] The poem itself gives the date of composition:—"I was writ in a Roman chamber, When from Janiculan heights thundered the cannon of France."

Clough; but the very resemblances between *Dipsychus* and other works of the time help to reveal how deep the influence of Goethe had penetrated. There is in *Dipsychus* a kinship to Bailey's *Festus* and to Dobell's *Balder*, which might momentarily tempt those who class Bailey as a Spasmodic Poet to include Clough also in that class.

It is more interesting to note in *Dipsychus* Clough's expression of Browning's favourite idea about the nature of evil. In all probability it is not a case of borrowing at all: Hegel had the idea before either Clough or Browning; and before *Dipsychus* was published Nathaniel Hawthorne had given, perhaps, the most striking expression to it in *The Marble Faun*. Something of the kind was becoming almost a necessity; and it was especially a necessity to one who, like Clough, had been driven from the old anchorage. It was a necessity too, though unacknowledged, to many who still imagined themselves to be riding there; for one of the most remarkable features of the time is the extraordinary way in which the old words have been made to express wholly new ideas. Of the millions who believe in the atonement, how many understand by it what their fathers understood? Intelligent and educated men can hardly now accept the crude idea that, sin having been committed, justice must be satisfied, and will be satisfied if only the innocent will consent to suffer for the guilty. In like manner, the conception of evil as the work of a devil, who himself must be a creature of an omnipotent deity, was seen to be a solution that solved nothing. And hence Dipsychus, after a beautiful passage descriptive of Venice, when he has taken and held and ordered on his brain

> "The faces, and the voices, and the whole mass
> O' the motley facts of existence flowing by,"

proceeds thus:—

> "O perfect! if 'twere all! But it is not;
> Hints haunt me ever of a more beyond:
> I am rebuked by a sense of the incomplete;
> Of a completion over soon assumed,
> Of adding up too soon. What we call sin,
> I could believe a painful opening out
> Of paths for ampler virtue. The bare field,
> Scant with lean ears of harvest, long had mocked

The vext laborious farmer; came at length
The deep plough in the lazy undersoil
Down-driving; with a cry earth's fibres crack,
And a few months, and lo! the golden leas,
And autumn's crowded shocks and loaded wains.
Let us look back on life; was any change,
Any now blest expansion, but at first
A pang, remorse-like, shot to the inmost seats
Of moral being? To do anything,
Distinct on any one thing to decide,
To leave the habitual and the old, and quit
The easy-chair of use and wont, seems crime
To the weak soul, forgetful how at first
Sitting down seemed so too."

Ere long Clough resigned his position at University Hall, and in 1852 went to Cambridge, Massachusetts, with the intention of settling there. In less than a year, however, he was recalled to England to take up an appointment in the Education Office, in which he spent the short and uneventful remainder of his life. His official duties took up most of his time, and during those years he wrote little poetry until, just before the close, he was compelled to take a holiday and go south for his health. During his travels he composed the tales entitled *Mari Magno*. But the health he sought did not come, and he sank under a malarial fever in November, 1861.

Besides the longer poems which have been mentioned, Clough is the author of a considerable number of shorter pieces. It is chiefly in these and in *Dipsychus* that we see the traces of the intellectual and religious struggle begun at Oxford. Those traces are to be found in such poems as *The New Sinai*; *Qui Laborat, Orat*; *Easter Day, Naples*, 1849; and *Easter Day*.

Clough sometimes assumes an attitude which is not that of dogmatic unbelief, any more than it is that of unquestioning faith. As if in anticipation of the position of the agnostics, though with a sentiment foreign to them, in the fine verses, *Ah! yet consider it again!* he enters a plea for suspense of judgment:—

"'Old things need not be therefore true,'
O brother men, nor yet the new;
Ah! still awhile the old thought retain,
And yet consider it again!

The souls of now two thousand years
Have laid up here their toils and fears,
And all the earnings of their pain,—
Ah, yet consider it again!

We! what do we see? each a space
Of some few yards before his face;
Does that the whole wide plan explain?
Ah, yet consider it again!

Alas! the great world goes its way,
And takes its truth from each new day;
They do not quit, nor can retain,
Far less consider it again."

Notwithstanding this, however, Clough's own view with regard to most of the articles of the creed of Christendom was essentially negative. He passes "through the great sinful streets of Naples,' and sees there the result of nineteen centuries of so-called Christianity; and the sight wrings from him the cry,

"Christ is not risen, no—
He lies and moulders low;
Christ is not risen!
* * * * *
What if the women, ere the dawn was grey,
Saw one or more great angels, as they say
(Angels, or Him himself)? Yet neither there, nor then,
Nor afterwards, nor elsewhere, nor at all,
Hath He appeared to Peter or the Ten;
Nor, save in thunderous terror, to blind Saul;
Save in an after Gospel and late Creed,
He is not risen, indeed—
Christ is not risen!"

It is true that in the epilogue, the second part of *Easter Day*, we read that He is

"Though dead, not dead;
Not gone, though fled;
Not lost, though vanished.
In the great gospel and true creed,
He is yet risen indeed;
Christ is yet risen."

But no careful student of Clough would interpret this as an assent to the orthodox doctrine: other parts of the poem altogether preclude such an interpretation. It is rather an affirmation of the creed that the good dies not. Clough's view is practically identical

with that of his friend, Matthew Arnold, who teaches that Christ lived while faith lived :—

> "While we believed, on earth he went,
> And open stood his grave.
> Men call'd from chamber, church, and tent;
> And Christ was by to save."

But faith passes, and with it Christ passes too :—

> "Now he is dead! Far hence he lies
> In the lorn Syrian town;
> And on his grave, with shining eyes,
> The Syrian stars look down."

But though the close of the second *Easter Day* cannot be interpreted as an acceptance of the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ, its hopefulness is noticeable. Courage was one of the virtues of Clough; and perhaps Arnold in *Thyrsis* has unwittingly done his friend an injustice in failing to bring this out with sufficient clearness. It is true Clough's "piping took a troubled sound"; but it is a mistake to suppose that he sank in the struggle or felt himself vanquished by his doubts.

> "Sit if ye will, sit down upon the ground,
> Yet not to weep and wail, but calmly look around,"

he cries to the women searching for their lost yet unrisen dead. Whatever in any creeds may be true or false, life is still to live and duty still to do. Perhaps the best of all expressions of Clough's spirit is to be found in the beautiful verses which close the volume of his *Poems* :—

> "Say not, the struggle nought availeth,
> The labour and the wounds are vain,
> The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
> And as things have been they remain.
>
> If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
> It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
> Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
> And, but for you, possess the field.
>
> For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
> Seem here no painful inch to gain,
> Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
> Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright."

In these verses there is that spirit of Stoicism which Arnold grandly expresses in *The Last Word*. But there is a characteristic difference between the pieces. Clough is the more hopeful poet of the two. Arnold lays the whole stress upon courageous endurance, the doing of duty in spite of the certainty of defeat. Clough sees all the western land bright in the sunshine, and the tide breaking in elsewhere if not here.

What is deepest in the spirit of Clough is concentrated in poems such as those which have just been quoted. But there were other aspects of his nature too, and these also are disclosed in his poems. He is bright and genial, as well as thoughtful and melancholy; and the lighter aspects are attractively shown in the *Bothie* and in *Mari Magno*, a collection of spirited tales, strongly influenced by Chaucer, especially in the introduction, which owes much to the *Prologue* to *The Canterbury Tales*. The numerous faults of *Mari Magno* must be condoned because it never received the author's final revision. It suggests that perhaps Clough might have done better if time and circumstance had not laid upon him such a task as that which he attempts in *Dipsychus*. As it is, he leaves in all his work a certain sense of inadequacy. He is rather a great Might-have-been, than great in actual performance.

One or two points of similarity between the work of Clough and that of his great friend Matthew Arnold have already been pointed out. Occasionally, though rarely, the similarity is so close that the work of the one might easily be taken for that of the other. Thus, if the authorship were doubtful, the following verses of Clough from *Songs in Absence* might be sworn to as Arnold's:—

"Somewhere—but where I cannot guess—
Beyond, may be, the bound of space,
The liberated spirits press
And meet, bless heaven, and embrace.

It seems not either here nor there,
Somewhere between us up above,
A region of a clearer air,
The dwelling of a purer love."

But it is not in scattered passages, or in chance resemblances of expression, that the true kinship between the two men is to be discovered. On the contrary, as far as mere style and form of expression go, there is contrast more frequently than resemblance. But the two agree in their conception of the poet's business, their deepest interests are the same, they have passed through the same experiences. The views of modern life, of its complexity, and the paralysis of action it produces, which we find in *Dipsychus*, are also to be found everywhere in the poetry of Arnold. Both are poets of doubt who would fain be poets of faith. Both have to rest content mainly with negations; but, notwithstanding the negations, each preaches a gospel of courage and of work.

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) went up to Oxford four years after Clough, and, like him, after the disaster of a second class in his schools, became a fellow of Oriel College. In 1847 he was appointed private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, and in 1851 he took the office of inspector of schools. Incongruous as the post seemed with Arnold's "Olympian manners" and his superb culture, in it he spent his life. He found in his occupation much that was interesting and well worth doing, as well as much that was tedious and trivial; and by the humbler work at home, as well as by his official visits to France, Germany and Holland, he did great service to the cause of education. Yet after all it must be confessed that using such an intellect for such purposes was a little like using a razor to chop sticks, and that he seems better placed in his ten years' professorship of poetry at Oxford, to which we owe several delightful volumes. Whether they manage such things better in France or no, it does seem that, with our Burnses as gaugers, and our Matthew Arnolds as inspectors of elementary schools, our management in England leaves something to be desired.

Matthew Arnold's poetry is in great part the work of his youth. In 1840 he won a prize at Rugby with a poem on *Alaric at Rome*;

and afterwards he won the Newdigate prize at Oxford with one on *Cromwell*. His first volume of poems was *The Strayed Reveller, and other Poems* (1849). Three years later came *Empedocles on Etna, and other Poems*. This was followed in 1853 by a volume entitled simply *Poems*, and consisting partly of new work and partly of pieces reprinted from the earlier volumes. The volume of 1855 contained only two new pieces, *Balder Dead* and *Separation*; but in the same year one of the most beautiful of all Arnold's poems, the *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*, was printed in *Fraser's Magazine*. In 1858 he published *Merope*, in 1866 *Thyrsis*, the exquisite elegy on his friend Clough, and in 1867 a volume entitled *New Poems*. It was the last volume of poetry from Arnold's pen. He afterwards wrote only occasional pieces, which were usually prompted by some event interesting to himself. *Westminster Abbey*, occasioned by the death of Stanley, and those beautiful elegies on dead pets which contain hardly less of Arnold's thought and feeling than he has consecrated to his human friends, are examples.

Two causes probably concurred to produce this early silence. One was the neglect and indifference with which Arnold's poems were received. Even among his own friends some were far from enthusiastic in their welcome: Clough himself reviewed *The Strayed Reveller* and *Empedocles* in a spirit which cannot be regarded without surprise and some pain. The world paid little or no attention. The second cause lay in the poet himself. His work is exquisite, but of limited range. Arnold has not the buoyancy which bears a poet on from theme to theme. The same sad undertone sounds through nearly all his verse; and it is possible that he had expressed himself fully at an age when the poetical powers of some poets are barely mature. The elegiac note, of which he is the unsurpassed master, is one which will not bear indefinite repetition. This view of the matter is confirmed by observing how completely representative of Arnold the first two volumes are, and how much of his best work they contain. Yet the one was published when he was twenty-seven, and the other when he was thirty. Along with *The Strayed Reveller* appeared, among other pieces, *The Forsaken Merman*, *Mycerinus*, *To a*

Gipsy Child, *Resignation*, and the sonnets *To a Friend* and *Shakespeare*; while *Empedocles* was accompanied with *Memorial Verses*, *A Summer Night*, and *Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann,'* as well as with the greater part of the two series of lyrics to which the titles *Switzerland* and *Faded Leaves* were subsequently given. In these pieces we have pretty nearly the complete range and scope of Arnold's genius. In later years he amplified and varied the illustrations; but, except in narrative poems in blank verse, he added very little of which there is not here already more than a hint. The blank-verse poems, *Sohrab and Rustum* and *Balder Dead*, followed almost immediately, the former in the volume of 1853, which contained also *The Scholar Gipsy*, the latter two years afterwards.

The question, what is the purport and teaching of Arnold's poetry? is one which is well worth investigating; and an explicit answer can be given to it; for one of the great merits of Arnold's verse is its lucidity. There are some writers whose place in history is of subordinate importance. We can, if we choose, trace in their work the influence of the age in which they lived, for no man ever escaped that influence; but we are not compelled to do so. In others, the influence is absolutely vital, and unless we attend to it we can never understand them. To the latter class Matthew Arnold belongs, and his work is the roundest and most complete expression of one great phase of nineteenth century thought. Much of it is in Clough also; but Arnold transcends Clough; and his superiority to the latter in poetic style alone would make him rather than his friend the true voice of that particular phase of thought.

In the beginning it is desirable to get rid of a misconception which is due to Arnold's prose rather than to his poetry. Many people fail to distinguish between religion and their own dogma; and as the author of *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible* attacked the majority of current dogmas, he has been widely regarded as irreligious. Arnold disbelieved in the divinity of Christ and at least doubted immortality; and he defined God as "a stream of tendency, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." He also insisted that it was time to Hellenise

and to praise knowing, because we had Hebraised too much, and had overvalued doing. But on the other hand he declared that conduct was three-fourths of life; he read the Bible far more carefully and thoughtfully than the great majority of the professed teachers of religion; and the most striking point in the recently-published selections from his Note-Books is the immense number of quotations charged with the very spirit of religion. Obviously it was in this sphere that his thought loved to dwell, and it was here that he found the strength for his daily work. Widely as his intellect separated him from the Catholic Church, he was never unsympathetic towards it. On the contrary, this sympathy is one of the most remarkable features of Arnold's verse. The author of the *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse* is more than just to the spirit of asceticism: he shows all its beauty, and he refrains from showing its deformity. Even in the poems which express his disbelief in the common faith there is a tremulous wail which proves that he would fain have believed if he could. That wail sounds through *Obermann once More*; and in *Dover Beach* the poet hears the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" of the Sea of Faith,

> "Retreating, to the breath
> Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
> And naked shingles of the world."

This attitude towards religion is the most characteristic thing in Arnold. He had no creed, but he had boundless sympathy. He never stood as close to the Oxford Movement as Clough did, and he came out of the turmoil perhaps even more completely stripped of dogma; but his regret was quite as poignant as Clough's.

In Arnold this negative attitude towards dogma is closely related to his position in history. He stood just far enough away from the French Revolution to look back upon it and its effects in a spirit of criticism. It had shattered the old world, and left in the place of an ordered system only "blocks of the past, like icebergs high," floating "on a rolling sea." On the other hand, he was not far enough away to enable him to see

what was to be the nature of the new world which must arise from the ruins. He was

> "Standing between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born."

There was need of the power which promised to make all things new, but its advent was delayed. Arnold looked around him in vain for any force capable of reconstructing society. The age just past had been potent for destruction, but powerless to create. It had proved to be

> "Europe's dying hour
> Of fitful dream and feverish power."

These fundamental convictions, that the faith which had shaped Europe was gone, and that the feudal mould of her society was shattered, are the secret of the wonderful attractive power exercised over Arnold by Senancour, the author of *Obermann*. Senancour too had felt the vastness of the change, and it is the cause of that "ground-tone of human agony" which sobs through his work. Men holding such convictions must inevitably be melancholy; and Arnold the poet is habitually melancholy. In this respect his verse is unlike his prose, which has more of the charming gaiety and playfulness of his own manners. Both the gaiety and the melancholy were features of his character, and J. C. Shairp has touched the contrast with admirable taste in the lines which describe the youthful scholar of Balliol:—

> "So full of power, yet blithe and debonair,
> Rallying his friends with pleasant banter gay,
> Or half-a-dream chaunting with jaunty air
> Great words of Goethe, catch of Béranger:
> We see the banter sparkle in his prose,
> But know not there the undertone which flows,
> So calmly sad, through all his stately lay."

Looking thus upon life, Arnold naturally could not be among the optimists, either those, like Macaulay, who were at ease in their Zion because of the material progress of the time, or those, like Browning, who were convinced that "God's in his heaven," and who therefore confidently drew the conclusion that "all's

right with the world." Arnold could find no place among the former class, because he saw that the "something that infects the world" could be cured not by material but only by spiritual means. It was no lack of material means that caused the decay of Rome. In the magnificent contrast between East and West, the Roman noble has all that external means can give—cool halls, rich wines, swift horses and chariots; and all are impotent, not merely to secure happiness, but to avert misery. Spiritual salvation comes accompanied by material ruin, in the birth of a new religion. Neither, on the other hand, could Arnold be among the Browningite optimists. To him it meant the assertion that the new religion *had* been born, without the proof. Still less could such a man feel himself in harmony with the attempts to revert to the Middle Ages. He thought the Middle Ages irrational; and he knew that any attempt to blot or blur the record of human progress must end in failure. In *A Summer Night* he has drawn imperishably, under the figure of a helmsman, the picture of him who attempts to steer his way across the ocean of life by any other chart than that of truth. The tempest strikes him,

> "And between
> The lightning-bursts is seen
> Only a driving wreck,
> And the pale master on his spar-strewn deck
> With anguish'd face and flying hair
> Grasping the rudder hard,
> Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
> Still standing for some false, impossible shore.
> And sterner comes the roar
> Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom
> Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,
> And he too disappears, and comes no more."

In Arnold's opinion, that which the time demands above all things is the discovery of some shore, not false or impossible, towards which to steer. We need some Columbus to guide us over a trackless ocean to a new continent which he discerns, though we cannot. Our misfortune is that we can find no such pilot. Goethe, the "physician" of Europe's "iron age," had laid his

finger on the seat of the disease, but he failed to find a cure. Arnold never conceived himself to be capable of succeeding where Goethe had failed. On the contrary, he rather teaches that the problem has grown so complex that scarcely any intellect could suffice for its solution. Herein he finds the principal difference between ancient and modern civilisation. The former is homogeneous. The Greek is Greek, and he thrusts the barbarian from him with a haughty wave of the hand. The Roman acknowledges the title of the Greek to the treatment of an equal; but he too feels himself a being of another sort from all the rest. The Jew in his own way was more exclusive than either; for there is even a profounder arrogance in the division between Jew and Gentile than there is in that between Greek and barbarian. But Arnold finds the type of modern civilisation in Rachel:—

> "Sprung from the blood of Israel's scatter'd race,
> At a mean inn in German Aarau born,
> To forms from antique Greece and Rome uptorn,
> Trick'd out with a Parisian speech and face,
> Imparting life renew'd, old classic grace;
> Then, soothing with thy Christian strain forlorn,
> A-Kempis! her departing soul outworn,
> While by her bedside Hebrew rites have place—
> Ah, not the radiant spirit of Greece alone
> She had—one power, which made her breast its home!
> In her, like us, there clash'd, contending powers,
> Germany, France, Christ, Moses, Athens, Rome.
> The strife, the mixture in her soul, are ours;
> Her genius and her glory are her own."

This feeling of almost insuperable difficulty is the secret of Arnold's melancholy. It gives a sense of brooding pause, almost of the paralysis of action, to his verse. It is the secret of his attraction for some minds, and of an alienation amounting almost to repulsion between him and many others. It makes him, in verse as well as in prose, critical rather than constructive. His much-condemned definition of poetry as "a criticism of life" is at least true of his own poetry. Even in the literary sense, there is a surprising quantity of wise criticism in his verse. Goethe,

Byron, Wordsworth and Senancour are all examined with wonderful insight; and in the *Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoön* we have a discussion of the principles of the arts of music, painting and poetry. But Arnold's verse is critical in a far deeper sense than this. It is, in accordance with his own definition, critical of *life*. In all his deepest poems, in *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar Gipsy*, in *Resignation*, in the *Obermann* poems, in *A Southern Night*, Arnold is passing judgment on the life of his age, the life of his country, the lives of individual men. In the last-named poem the fate of his brother, dying an exile in the attempt to return to the country of his birth, becomes the text for a sermon on the restless energy of the English, and on the "strange irony of fate" which preserves for the members of such a race graves so peaceful as theirs by "those hoary Indian hills" and "this gracious Midland sea."

In all this Arnold is quite consistent with himself. Holding that what Europe in his generation principally needed was criticism, he gave this criticism in verse as well as in prose. And it may be remarked that the principle underlying his literary verdicts in prose is the same as that which underlies his poetic view of life. He treats his author not as an isolated fact, and judges him not by any abstract canons. He tries to put him back in his social setting, to look from his point of view, to judge him as a part of that life in which he mingled.

As regards his poetical method, Arnold is essentially classical, not romantic. Not since Milton has there been any English poet more deeply imbued with the classical spirit. Arnold was so by native predilection; but his innate tendency was strengthened by the operation of a principle he was never tired of insisting upon—the principle that what we ought to attempt should be determined for us by a consideration of what is needful. He condemned Carlyle in England and Gambetta in France for the error of carrying coals to Newcastle, by giving the weight of their authority to those qualities which their respective countrymen already possessed in excess. Arnold's own design was to tone down what was excessive and to supply what was deficient. It was this which made him turn to France, and insist so much on the value

of French literature to England. He thought it more valuable to Englishmen than German literature, just because it was more remote from them, and was rich in the qualities in which they were poor. Arnold has been accused of overrating French literature. He may have overrated individual writers, but no one ever took a juster or saner view of the literature as a whole; and he certainly cannot be charged with exaggerating French merits in the line, "France, famed in all great arts, in none supreme."

The same principle led him to Hellenise, to insist upon the vital importance of regarding the whole, instead of being content with the beauty of the separate parts, and to inculcate the study of lucidity, restraint and proportion. This is the essence of his classicism; for it was only occasionally that he chose an antique theme, or deliberately imitated the Greek manner; nor was he always successful when he did so. *Merope* as a whole is frigid, and the few fine passages it contains are not sufficient to redeem the whole. The subject of *Empedocles* is ancient, but the spirit is modern, and the poet himself speaks through the lips of the ancient philosopher. The grand chant of Empedocles is unmistakably Arnold's. So too the whole substance of Arnold's thought is modern. On almost every page he proclaims himself a man of the nineteenth century, and few poets could be more surely dated from internal evidence alone. But he is Greek in his insistence that there shall be a definite thought, which shall be lucidly expressed. Neither the charms nor the defects of extreme romanticism or impressionism were possible to him.

Among English poets the man to whom Arnold was most indebted was Wordsworth; and he has repaid the debt by the exquisite skill of his selection from Wordsworth's writings, which has probably done more than anything else to spread a love for that great but most unequal poet. As a student and lover of nature he followed Wordsworth; but his method and his results in some respects differ widely from those of his master. He has Wordsworth's calm, but neither his cheerfulness nor his detachment. Wordsworth lives and thinks with the hills for his sole companions, but Arnold never rests in nature alone. For the steady optimism of Wordsworth there is substituted in Arnold

the sense that a destiny so rarely yielding great results as the life of man,

> "Though bearable, seems hardly worth
> This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth."

In their wonderful accuracy Arnold's references to nature illustrate that conscientiousness of the intellect which is one of his most honourable distinctions. The accuracy of Tennyson has been greatly and justly praised; but an exceptionally competent judge, Lord de Tabley, himself not only a poet, but one of the most accomplished botanists of his time, gives Arnold the preference over even Tennyson. The latter, he says, occasionally goes wrong, but he can always trust Arnold. Nor is it in respect to flowers alone that Arnold is accurate. Mountains, lakes, roads, rivers, are all located and portrayed with precision. The foundation of this accuracy is seen in the loving minuteness with which in his letters Arnold notes the facts of nature. This, however, was only one aspect of that passion for truth which Arnold never ceased to cherish. Herein he was a disciple of Goethe, the "rigorous teacher," who showed him "the high white star of truth"; and it was this passion which stood in the way of his finding under the shelter of authority an easy solution of the intellectual difficulties which beset him. Herein too he was emphatically the child of his own age. More than Clough, more than anyone else, he is the poet of agnosticism, expressing its spirit in a mournful music, before the name itself had been thought of. This is the outcome of his uncompromising intellectual sincerity. Neither to himself nor to others will he pretend to know that which he does not know; and his conviction is that the old beliefs have been discredited, and there are none to set in their place.

Nothing in Arnold's verse is more arresting than its elegiac element. It is not too much to say that there is no other English poet in whom the elegiac spirit so reigns as it does in him: perhaps he who approaches nearest to him in this respect is Mr William Watson. Other great poets—Milton, Gray, Shelley, Tennyson—have given grand expression to their sorrow in single elegies; but no one else returns so frequently as Arnold to the

elegiac form. He found in the elegy the outlet of his native melancholy, of the "Virgilian cry" over the mournfulness of mortal destiny. It is the natural tone of an agnostic who is not jubilant, but regretful of the vanished faith,—regretful of its beauty, and regretful of the lost promise.

Not only are Arnold's elegiacs numerous, they are almost invariably among his finest work. And always his spirit is that of Gray rather than that of Milton or Shelley or Tennyson. Arnold's elegies are charged with the *lacrimae rerum*; they have never the triumphant and inspiring ring of Milton's and Shelley's. But as little are they elegies merely of the individual. The subject of *Rugby Chapel* is his own father; in *A Southern Night* it is his brother; in *Westminster Abbey* and in *Thyrsis*, his most intimate friends; but even in these instances of keen personal sorrow the poet widens his view and treats of human destiny, almost as much as Gray does in the *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*. And precisely the same spirit inspires poems which are not elegiac in the sense of being laments for individual men. *Thyrsis*, the poem on Clough, is scarcely more elegiac in spirit than *The Scholar Gipsy*. In both the real theme is the condition of modern life, its feverishness, its "sick hurry," and its "divided aims." It is so too in the '*Obermann*' poems, the *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*, the *Stanzas from Carnac*, *Heine's Grave* and *Memorial Verses*. In all there is the same stateliness of utterance, and the same calmly sad undertone. They are the voice of a spirit almost crushed beneath the burden of life. Hence Arnold's grave rebuke in verse of the materialistic spirit, his plea for gentleness and quiet as against bustling energy, "trenchant force, and will like a dividing spear." Hence too his banter in prose of the "young lions of the *Daily Telegraph*" and his fear lest "every voice not of thunder" be silenced. It is this which attracts him to the monastic life, and wrings from him a momentary cry for shelter in the cloister:—

> "Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,
> Ye solemn seats of holy pain!
> Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round,
> Till I possess my soul again."

This is a favourite phrase, to "possess his soul"; and the chief fault the poet finds with his countrymen is that we

> "See all sights from pole to pole,
> And glance, and nod, and bustle by,
> And never once possess our soul
> Before we die."

The lesson he himself draws from the world is, Resignation. Nature herself teaches it:—

> "Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
> The solemn hills around us spread,
> This stream which falls incessantly,
> The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,
> If I might lend their life a voice,
> Seem to bear rather than rejoice."

And hence his injunction is,

> "Be passionate hopes not ill resign'd
> For quiet, and a fearless mind."

There are, however, two kinds of resignation. One is the somewhat ignoble resignation of the cloister, which seems to be Arnold's choice in the *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*. The other is the stoic resignation inspired by a sense of duty unhelped by any hope of reward; and this manlier sort is really Arnold's. As we have seen, his "rigorous teachers" forbade the surrender of intellect and enjoined the facing of all difficulties at whatever cost, and even although the end were failure. It was Browning who taught that under apparent failure there may be hidden real success, but the spirit of the teaching inspires Arnold's work. His whole life, devoted as it was to the effort to elevate his countrymen, by his verse and by his prose and by his practical professional work, is a proof that his was the nobler sort of resignation.

"The hopeless tangle of the age," which is one of the causes tending to make resignation a necessity, has been already dwelt upon. Another cause is the inevitable loneliness of humanity;

and this too is among the thoughts most constantly present to Arnold's mind, and most beautifully expressed by him:—

> "Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
> With echoing straits between us thrown,
> Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
> We mortal millions live *alone*."

The pathos of the poems on his dead pets lies in the sense of their isolation from their human keepers. The "ebb of life and mortal pain" in the poor canary have been altogether misunderstood; the pathetic eyes of Geist were charged with a meaning we could but dimly comprehend. And this isolation of man from animal is only one degree greater than that of man from man.

> "Brother man's despairing sign
> Who can trust us to divine?"

Our destiny is to spend life

> "In beating where we must not pass
> And seeking what we shall not find."

All efforts are vain to bridge "the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea" which rolls between one soul and another. And the law is wider than humanity, or than animal life: the great powers of nature themselves have the same loneliness:—

> "The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,
> But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams;
> Alone the sun arises, and alone
> Spring the great streams."

Next, perhaps, to the elegies and the elegiac lyrics, Arnold shows best in the sonnets. The severe restraint of the form was hardly necessary to him; but it suited him, and as a sonneteer in the Italian form he ranks with the best in English literature. *Quiet Work*, *To a Friend* and *The Good Shepherd with the Kid* are among the treasures of poetry. And these sonnets reveal, only less than the elegiac poems, the personal qualities and aspirations of the author. That on Sophocles has been referred to by more than one critic as containing in the line, "He saw life steadily, and saw it whole," a perfect expression of what Arnold himself attempted to do.

"He is like a starry night with a touch of frost—beautiful and chilly," is a judgment which many would pronounce to be appropriate to Arnold. It is sometimes expressed otherwise in the statement that his poetry is statuesque. Certainly there is some truth in such judgments; and it may be worth while to enquire what precisely are the limits of their truth. In respect of passion, and colour, and movement, Arnold is singularly unlike such contemporaries as Browning and Rossetti, and such predecessors as Byron and Shelley. The element of passion is not wholly absent from Arnold's poetry, but it is subordinate, and the mode of treatment is quite different from that of the other poets just named. *Switzerland*, in the hands of Shelley, would have been a series of passionate love-lyrics: Arnold makes it a beautiful and pathetic expression of his view of life. In *Tristram and Iseult* the poet chooses, not the moment of passion, but the close of the passionate life, and he ends with a warning of the fate which overtakes the man who fails to govern his passions. In *The Church of Brou* the lovers are already dead, and, waking in their tomb, they take the sound of the wind for the sweep of angels' wings, and hear in the rain upon the roof "the rustle of the eternal rain of love." Only in *The Forsaken Merman* does Arnold give himself a loose rein; and this is one reason why that poem is a favourite with many who are not otherwise appreciative of him.

The colour in which Arnold delights is in harmony with this treatment of passion. It is all subdued and cold. We find in him few of those vivid reds which Sir Philip Sidney's blind man imagined to be like "the sound of a trumpet"; and neither are there any of the trumpet notes in Arnold's verse. He loves moonlight more than sunlight, and the cold purity of Alpine snow more than the rich glow of tropic colour.

> "All is silver-grey,
> Placid and perfect,"

with Arnold's art as well as with Andrea del Sarto's; and many would be inclined to add of Arnold, as Browning makes Andrea add of himself, the exclamation, the worse!

So too of movement. Arnold himself condemned *Empedocles*

on Etna on the ground that a situation in which everything was to be endured and nothing to be done was faulty. Afterwards he withdrew the embargo he had laid upon his own work; and fortunately so, for *Empedocles* contains much of his finest verse. Moreover, as R. H. Hutton pointed out, this principle would have condemned by far the greater part, and the best, of his subsequent verse. Nowhere in Arnold do we find movement. *Merope* has it not, and, being a drama, it is marred in consequence. Even the narrative poems, *Sohrab and Rustum* and *Balder Dead*, have very little; but the poet has so chosen his subjects and so handles them that its absence is scarcely noticed. We are grateful for the beautiful blank verse, for the stately similes, for the pathos; and we turn elsewhere for story. The great majority of Arnold's pieces need no movement; but the choice of such themes is significant.

All this is, not perhaps a necessity, but a very natural result of Arnold's reflectiveness. In a few writers we have a perfect balance between thought and action. In Shakespeare we have the breathless rapidity of *Macbeth*, as well as the brooding of *Hamlet*; and we find the one almost as much charged with thought as the other. But usually where we have the sense of action and the gift of rapid narrative, as in Scott, or intensity of passion, as in Byron, we have relative deficiency in reflection. Arnold is on the other side of the line, and in him thought raises a barrier against action.

Mr William Watson, in answer to criticisms directed against himself, has justly pointed out that there is a passion of the intellectual as well as a passion of the emotional nature. It is the failure to perceive this which causes the charge of coldness to be brought against such writers as Arnold and Mr Watson. Though they have little of the latter kind of passion, they are full of the former; and it seems to be a misuse of words to stigmatise as cold poems so full of the fervour of thought as the '*Obermann*' poems, or *Thyrsis*, or *The Father of the Forest*. Perhaps on this point the best test is the lyric, which is above all the poetry of emotion, and to which coldness is fatal. Now it is just in the lyric that Arnold's greatest triumphs have been won. The elegies already noticed are lyrical; and we have besides such pieces as the exquisite *Requiescat* and the song of Callicles in *Empedocles on Etna* with regard to

which Swinburne declared that "for the absolute loveliness of sound and colour" there were "no adequate words which would not seem violent." We have moreover the wonderful close of *The Forsaken Merman*, the effect of which is certainly not chilly:—

"But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow,
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring-tides are low;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starr'd with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanch'd sands a gloom,
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town,
At the church on the hill-side—
And then come back down,
Singing: 'There dwells a loved one,
But cruel is she,
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea.'"

§ 2. *Edward FitzGerald.*

There is just one tie which binds Edward FitzGerald (1809–1883) to the Oxford poets, from whom in most respects he differs widely. Though he is not a poet of the sceptical reaction, he has given the most perfect of all expressions to the spirit and thought which made the reaction inevitable, and that in the form of a translation from the Persian of eight hundred years ago.

There is no man in recent literature more difficult to 'place' than Edward FitzGerald. His position is unique. Professedly only a translator, he was in reality an original poet as well, ranking, in respect of power, after only a very few of his contemporaries. "An eccentric man of genius," it was his whim or his peculiarity

to mask and disguise his gifts; and only a few of his friends completely penetrated the veil which, consciously or unconsciously, he threw over himself. His diffidence partly concealed his genius even from himself. He was conscious of power to do as well as most; but whether he had power sufficient to do what was worth doing, of that he was uncertain. "I know," he says in his *Letters*, "that I could write volume after volume as well as others of the mob of gentlemen who write with ease: but I think unless a man can do better, he had best not do at all: I have not the strong inward call, nor cruel-sweet pangs of parturition, that prove the birth of anything bigger than a mouse." Far more than literary fame he valued the friendship of a few men of letters; and he enjoyed that of the greatest of the time. Both to Tennyson and to Thackeray he was "old Fitz" or "dear old Fitz"; and the latter, asked which of his friends he loved most, at once named him along with Brookfield[1]. He was one of the few contemporaries for whom Carlyle felt nothing but kindliness. And one other friendship must be noticed because, although James Spedding cannot be ranked with these three, he was in FitzGerald's judgment the wisest man he had ever known.

Distrust of self, indifference to literary fame, and contentment with these friendships, all concurred to keep him silent. He had no "spur to prick the sides of his intent." The retirement in which he lived tended to the same results. His seclusion became so deep that about Christmas, 1866, he wrote to Carlyle with compliments to Mrs Carlyle, who had been dead since the previous April. Nevertheless, this shy, retiring man, who looked upon himself as fit only to appreciate and to select the beauties of other men who were in danger of being forgotten, contrived to produce one of the most remarkable poems of the epoch, and by reason of that poem more sure of immortality than any except a mere handful of his contemporaries.

Everything FitzGerald wrote has the touch of the born man of letters. He is excellent in prose as well as in verse. The letters to his friends flow on easily, delightfully, with bits of quiet humour and innumerable evidences of sincerity and kindliness of heart.

[1] Melville's *Life of Thackeray*, ii. 71.

The writer's whims and oddities, his waywardness, his strong and absolutely unconventional likes and dislikes, all combine with the most sterling qualities of head and heart to make those letters among the most charming in the English language. His prose dialogue, *Euphranor* (1851), is full of grace and of the beauty of pure, limpid English; and the passage descriptive of the boat-race is a model of faultless prose style. But it is as a translator of Calderon, of Aeschylus, and above all of Omar Khayyám, that he will live. In this department of translation the Victorian era has been as copious as it has been in other branches of literature. All sorts of men—scholars, statesmen, poets—have tried their hand at it. Limiting the view to the three classical authors, Homer, Virgil and Horace, who have most attracted translators, we have, among many others, versions by Lords Derby, Lytton and Bowen, Gladstone, William Morris, Theodore Martin, Conington, Worsley, Norgate, Butcher and Lang, Mackail. Prose and verse—blank, ballad metre, Spenserian stanza—have all been tried. But the law of selection among translations is almost as severe as it is in original poetry.

> "A thousand poets pried at life,
> And only one amid the strife
> Rose to be Shakespeare."

And the number of translations which are likely to retain a permanent position in literature might almost be numbered on the fingers of one hand. Three, upon which time has already set its seal, are the Authorised Version of the Bible, Chapman's Homer and Pope's Homer; two more, which probably will receive that seal, are achievements of the nineteenth century—Jowett's Plato and FitzGerald's Omar Khayyám. All of these examples go to show that a translation, to be literary, must not be too literal. Of the five mentioned, Jowett's Plato has been severely criticised on the ground that it does not accurately render the Greek of Plato; and all the immense labour of the Revised Version was undergone in order to correct the inaccuracies of the Authorised Version. But no competent judge would assert that, as a piece of literature, the Revised Version is

fit to take the place of its predecessor; and only prejudice can be blind to the fact that if Jowett has not rendered the words of Plato as accurately as some of his rivals, he has rendered his spirit far better. As to the other three translations, not one of them even makes a pretence of verbal accuracy. It would seem that each generation will insist on re-discovering for itself what precisely a great man has said in a foreign tongue, and will make its own literal translation; but it will accept from the past and permanently cherish that which gives in grand bold outline the form of the thing translated, or that which, like Pope's work, is "a very pretty poem," though it may not be Homer.

To the latter category all FitzGerald's translations belong. The liberties he takes with his text are great; but by some subtle intellectual chemistry he 'precipitates' the soul of the original with a success no literal renderer ever has succeeded in rivalling. The best description of the character of his work is that of Professor C. E. Norton: "He is to be called 'translator' only in default of a better word, one which should express the poetic transfusion of a poetic spirit from one language to another, and the re-presentation of the ideas and images of the original in a form not altogether diverse from their own, but perfectly adapted to the new conditions of time, place, custom and habit of mind in which they reappear....It is the work of a poet inspired by the work of a poet; not a copy, but a reproduction, not a translation, but the redelivery of a poetic inspiration[1]."

The series of FitzGerald's translations began with his rendering of six dramas by Calderon (1853), the only book which ever bore his name on publication. He afterwards added *The Mighty Magician* and *Such Stuff as Dreams are made on*, "taken from" *El Mágico Prodigioso* and *La Vida es Sueño*. The original six dramas had been selected from among the less-known plays of Calderon; and apparently FitzGerald had been influenced in his choice by a fear that the liberties he took with the text would be resented if they were taken with the better-known plays. In the Advertisement he apologises for those liberties. He curtails and

[1] Quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism*, vii. 516.

omits, and, where it is necessary, fills in by lines of his own the *lacunae* so created. The justification of the liberties lies in their success. FitzGerald succeeded in his aim of making Calderon readable and interesting to those who knew no Spanish; while to those who are familiar with the language his deviations from the original are harmless. The result consequently is a clear gain to the great Spanish dramatist, who gets a new audience which assuredly would not have been won by a literal translation.

Undeterred by the far wider knowledge of his originals, FitzGerald took equally great liberties when, long afterwards, he came to translate, or, as he jestingly says, to make 'per-versions' from the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus and the *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus Coloneus* of Sophocles. In these cases he had far less justification. In Calderon, as he sensibly urges, there was much that was likely to alienate an English reader—improbabilities, bombast, stage properties, that were better removed. But such a plea is not valid with respect to the classical dramas. The classical tradition was familiar to English readers, and the classical form of drama was represented to them by great original works in their own language. Moreover, the plays he selected were among the best-known works of antiquity. These were strong reasons for leaving them as he found them and translating, if not literally, at least with every respect for the form and substance. But FitzGerald cuts and carves, omits and adds, and takes liberties as great or nearly as great as he takes with Calderon. He attempts to justify himself; but the best justification is one which he does not plead. This free way was the only way in which he could work: he is compelled in all cases to mix himself with his author; in all cases we find in his versions much of Edward FitzGerald; at no point can we be sure, without reference to the original, that we have Calderon, or Sophocles, or Omar.

FitzGerald never pretended to be a learned man. At Cambridge he was under some anxiety as to whether he would pass the examination for his poll degree. But he read in a leisurely fashion what interested himself, and in the long run acquired a wide knowledge of books in a considerable number of languages.

And as he walked in the by-ways of life, so he was apt to turn aside from the beaten track in literature. About the time when he finished his Spanish dramas he began the study of Persian under the influence of his friend, E. B. Cowell, the Oriental scholar. At that time few either knew or cared for Persian literature, though Morier's *Hajji Baba* had done something to spread a knowledge of Persian life and manners. FitzGerald's acquaintance with Persian was never great; but even through the obscurity of a language half mastered he had the gift of detecting what suited his own genius; and he found it here. He tried his hand, still 'prentice at Persian, on Jámí's *Salámán and Absál* (1856); but he found his title to immortality in the great rendering of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1859). No great book ever stole more silently into print. No one noticed it. Two hundred and fifty copies were printed, and of these FitzGerald presented some two hundred to Quaritch. He kept the rest, but all except two or three long remained hidden away in his cupboards: he did not present them because he thought most would be indifferent, and many would be shocked by the philosophy and theology of the astronomer-poet. The experience of the bookseller showed that the translator was not mistaken as to the indifference. Quaritch disposed of the copies in his hands at a penny each, because customers would pay no more; and at that price copies were bought the year after publication by Rossetti and Swinburne. Now, a small library has grown up round Omar, and the greater part of that library is unquestionably due to the inspiration of FitzGerald.

The point in which FitzGerald's *Omar* surpasses almost if not quite all translations of poetry is that in itself it gives the impression of a great original poem. In ordinary verse translations, the reader cannot forget the existence of the original, even if he has never read it, because the translator is manifestly not uttering his own thoughts. In FitzGerald, notwithstanding Eastern symbolism, we never without an effort remember Omar. There is none of the sense of loss which translation normally gives. Only the freedoms which FitzGerald allowed himself could have produced such a result; and these would have been unavailing had not

the man who took them been himself a poet of no mean quality[1].

A good deal of investigation has been made, and some complaint uttered, with regard to FitzGerald's treatment of his text. "Many quatrains," he himself says, "are mashed together: and something lost, I doubt, of Omar's simplicity, which is such a virtue in him." "It must be admitted," says his editor, with a touch of solemnity, "that FitzGerald took great liberties with the original in his version of Omar Khayyám[2]." Several later translations have appeared which purport to represent the true Omar more faithfully than FitzGerald. As to their fidelity, only Persian scholars have a right to pronounce an opinion; but it is plain to the English reader that the true Omar has small cause to be thankful for the more literal versions. He shines out a far greater poet in the free rendering of FitzGerald than in any of those which claim to be more faithful.

A poem built up, like Omar's, out of quatrains unconnected by any story and without specific theme might easily become a mere jumble of atoms. Each quatrain might have a beauty of its own, like a sonnet; and, the units being short, they would be apt to group themselves together like the quatrains in the sections of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. But they need have no unity further than that. FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyám* has, however, a unity which goes far beyond this; and herein lies its subtlest charm. The parts are bound together as intimately as those of *In Memoriam*, though by a less palpable bond. It is more like the connexion between the sonnets of Shakespeare; and, as in Shakespeare's case, it has to be felt rather than expressed. This unity seems to have been in part the creation of FitzGerald, skilfully working upon and adapting the materials supplied to him by Omar. At any rate, the peculiarly modern tone, which

[1] As to FitzGerald's relation to his original, the most thorough investigator, Mr Heron-Allen, pronounces that "a translation pure and simple it is *not*, but a translation in the most artistic sense of the term it undoubtedly is." The materials Mr Heron-Allen furnishes prove conclusively that FitzGerald almost always had *some* original, but that he handled it with the utmost freedom.

[2] *Letters*.

does so much to bring home to the English reader the inner meaning of the poem, is largely imparted by FitzGerald. It is curious enough that that quatrain which was most obnoxious to popular views of religion, and which, among others, occasioned a certain awe and fear to some of FitzGerald's friends, and even to FitzGerald himself[1], appears to be the outcome partly of interpolation, and partly, it is suggested, of the process of 'mashing':—

"Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take!"

Professor Cowell says that there is no original for the line about the snake; and he adds that he has always supposed the last line to be FitzGerald's mistranslation of a quatrain in Nicolas's edition, which he gives. It may be so; but it would be strange to find in a mere mistranslation the origin of such a powerful and conspicuously modern line. The fact that FitzGerald never cared to alter it, though his attention was called to the supposed mistake, is suggestive of a very different explanation.

At the outset FitzGerald had to choose between two rival interpretations of the original quatrains. According to one view, all the sensuous imagery, the cup and the wine and the rest, were to be taken literally, and the poem was the utterance of an epicurean determined to make the best of an evanescent life which was all he knew and all he might ever enjoy:—

"Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain—*This* Life flies;
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies."

The rival theory was that which saw in the poem an allegory, in the poet a devout Súfi, in the wine an emblem of God. Fortunately, FitzGerald had no hesitation about *his* interpretation. He had been sceptical about the Súfism even of Hafiz: he was fully

[1] "I told Parker," he says before the publication, "he might find it rather dangerous among his Divines"; and he adds that "he thinks he will take it back and add some stanzas which he had kept out for fear of being too strong" (*Letters*, 469).

convinced that there was no Súfism at all about Omar, that the wine he sang was the wine which is forbidden to the orthodox Mahommedan, which maketh glad the heart of man, and which also steals away his reason. In this light accordingly the translation represents Omar. Its spirit and character cannot be better given than in FitzGerald's own words to his friend Cowell. "It is," he says, "most ingeniously tesselated into a sort of Epicurean Eclogue in a Persian Garden[1]."

Yet FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyám* is far from being a mere drinking song. Its hold upon the mind is due to the fact that it is the expression of a philosophy of life. The sum of that philosophy, it is true, is no more than "eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die." But it is tinged with the "infinite regret for all that might have been." It is full of the wistful melancholy of a nature greater than its destiny. Omar—FitzGerald's Omar—is best compared with Horace; and the qualities which have made Horace pre-eminently the poet of the man of the world give Omar too an eloquence of appeal to the heart. The Roman poet garlands his brow with flowers, quaffs the Falernian and the Massic wine, and bids defiance to care. And even so Omar:—

> "Perplext no more with Human or Divine,
> To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
> And lose your fingers in the tresses of
> The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine."

But Horace has his other mood, in which he feels the need of Stoicism to buttress the Epicureanism which cannot wholly satisfy a thoughtful mind:—

> "O beate Sesti,
> Vitae summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam.
> Jam te premet nox fabulaeque Manes
> Et domus exilis Plutonia."

Omar too has his more serious moods, and is perplexed with obstinate questionings:—

> "There was the Door to which I found no Key;
> There was the Veil through which I might not see:
> Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
> There was—and then no more of THEE and ME.

[1] *Letters.*

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn."

He too has his melancholy regret at the passing of youth and beauty and pleasure:—

"Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!"

There are strings in the lyre of Horace which are mute in that of Omar. In the latter, there is nothing to set beside the heroic odes at the opening of the third book of Horace. But on the other hand, there are notes in Omar which set our deepest thoughts vibrating as nothing in Horace does. Modern European civilisation is founded partly upon the East as well as upon the West. Horace is purely western; but in Omar as translated by FitzGerald the East is blended with the West. This is the reason why Omar might have proved "dangerous" among Parker's divines. They regarded with easy indifference the sceptical Epicureanism of Horace; for, though he is singularly modern in some respects, he is nevertheless essentially of the ancient world and belongs to another "dispensation." But Omar, passed through the alembic of FitzGerald's mind, is a modern, and when he turns his sceptical intellect upon the problems of the universe—*proximus ardet Ucalegon.* The *Rubáiyát* are a "criticism of life," not in some far-off country and among unfamiliar men, but here and now—the life all have to live, the destiny all have to look forward to, the bounds of thought against which all must beat in vain.

The single work upon which FitzGerald's fame will permanently rest consists of only 404 lines, and it professes to be no more than a translation. He therefore lacks volume, and he lacks originality, two very important wants. But the poem which the world owes to Edward FitzGerald and to Omar Khayyám jointly is one of the jewels of the nineteenth century. Coleridge, who has one of the safest reputations among the poets of recent times,

owes it all to a mere handful of verses; but Mr Stopford Brooke said of him long ago that those verses ought to be bound in pure gold. And no binding less precious is worthy of the masterpiece of Edward FitzGerald.

§ 3. *The Pre-Raphaelites.*

A word of explanation, and perhaps of apology, may be necessary for the application of the term Pre-Raphaelite to a group of literary men. It is a term which belongs properly to the history of painting, and not to that of poetry. In poetry it has no specific signification, except so far as it derives meaning by reflection from its use in relation to art, and indicates a certain phase of the great romantic movement which governed nearly all the imaginative literature of the time. Nevertheless, it serves a useful purpose in binding together a group of men who had common aims and whose writings were so intimately related to their art that the transference of a word from one to the other seems scarcely a transference at all. For not only were a number of these men at once artists and writers, but they repeatedly used pen to illustrate pencil, or pencil to illustrate pen. For example, there is a whole group of Rossetti's sonnets illustrative of his own pictures or of those of other painters.

The leading spirit in this Pre-Raphaelite group was Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), and it becomes important to understand what manner of man he was and what were the ideals which inspired him. By blood Rossetti was three-quarters Italian and only one-quarter English, his father being an Italian political refugee and his mother a daughter of Gaetano Polidori. Naturally therefore he was from childhood intimately acquainted with the Italian language, and he also came to know Italian literature well; yet he seems never to have felt that powerful attraction which has drawn many Englishmen of pure blood towards Italy, as much as, or even more than, towards their own country. "He liked England and the English," says his brother, "better than any

other country and nation[1]"; and notwithstanding his studies in Dante, his mind was moulded by English more than by Italian literature.

Under his father's roof Dante Rossetti heard constant talk about political questions, but such questions never excited his own interest. On the political side his mind appears to have been a blank. One or two other *lacunae* in his vigorous intelligence are not less noteworthy. He "dealt firmly" in the hearing of Burne-Jones with a man who unwarily professed an interest in metaphysics[2]. Living in an age of science, he "was himself not sure that the earth really revolved round the sun! 'Our senses did not tell us so, at any rate, and what then did it matter whether it did move or not?' What Dante knew was enough for him. He then remembered Galileo, another Italian, and gave in! It might matter in a scientific way, oh yes[3]!" It is even more surprising to find that the author of *Songs of the Art Catholic*, the painter of the Girlhood of Mary Virgin, cared nothing about Tractarianism. "If he knew anything about 'the Gorham controversy,'" says his brother, "it was only that Carlyle coupled 'prevenient grace' with 'supervenient moonshine[4].'" Yet if he had little or no dogmatic religion he had a profound feeling for the supernatural. "Any writing about devils, spectres, or the supernatural generally, whether in poetry or in prose, had always a fascination for him[5]"; and in later days, when his mind had lost its balance, he fell a victim to spiritualism, and began to call up the spirit of his dead wife by table-turning.

Within his own domain of art, however, Rossetti's interests were keen and his intellect most active. The atmosphere of his home was impregnated with literature as well as with politics; and while Dante Rossetti's mind took no colour from the latter, it greedily absorbed every influence from the former. Most of

[1] *Memoir*, i. 158. [2] Mackail's *Life of Morris*, i. 101.

[3] W. Bell Scott's *Autobiography*, i. 291.

[4] *Memoir*, i. 114. I accept as authoritative Mr W. M. Rossetti's account of his brother's religious opinions. Other writers, who have given widely different views, are probably less fully informed.

[5] W. M. Rossetti, Preface to *Collected Works of Dante Rossetti*.

the great English poets of recent times, and in addition the American Edgar Allan Poe, reigned over his mind in turn. In the long run, his brother tells us, he "perhaps enjoyed and revered Coleridge beyond any other modern poet whatsoever." But above any of them, above all other books in the world, he ranked the Bible and Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*—a curious collocation, made all the more curious and instructive by the fact that the latter influenced him more than the former. But Rossetti was a painter as well as a poet—a painter by profession, a poet for enjoyment and as a form of expression of the soul. After an attempt to carry on the two arts simultaneously, Rossetti found or fancied that his poetry interfered with his painting; and about the age of twenty-five, as he told Mr Hall Caine, he gave up poetry, writing after that scarcely anything, except the renovated *Jenny*, till the publication of the *Poems* in 1870. Rossetti's choice between the two arts in which he was eminent was determined by his conviction that painting was the art of the future, and poetry that of the past. He was accustomed to maintain that Keats was and would remain the last great English poet. "If any man has any poetry in him," he said to Burne-Jones, "he should paint, for it has all been said and written, and they have scarcely begun to paint it[1]."

Evidently, then, Rossetti had two widely separated periods of poetical production; one opening about 1847 and extending to about 1853; the other opening shortly after the publication of the *Poems*, and continuing, with intervals, down to the poet's death. Part of his verse must therefore he considered as the work of a very young man, and part of it as that of a man of middle age.

The celebrated Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in 1848. It included at first only three painters, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Rossetti, and one sculptor, Thomas Woolner. With these were soon afterwards associated James Collinson, a domestic painter, Frederick George Stephens, an Academy student, who was succeeded when he retired by Walter Deverell, and William Michael Rossetti, the brother of Dante. No one else was ever a member of the Brotherhood, but

[1] Mackail's *Life of Morris*, i. 110.

several others were more or less intimately associated with them; and among these may be mentioned Christina Rossetti, Coventry Patmore and William Bell Scott. The impulse which primarily drew them together was an artistic, not a literary one. They were moved by the "contemptible and even scandalous" condition of British art; and the year of political revolution was not inappropriately, though doubtless by pure accident, selected by these youths for the initiation of a revolution in art. The first pictures painted under the inspiration of the new ideal were exhibited in the galleries of 1849. But the Brethren felt the need of some means by which they might express and illustrate their principles in words as well as on canvas; and this led to the foundation of their magazine, *The Germ*, the four numbers of which (the last two under the changed title of *Art and Poetry*) appeared between the beginning of January and the end of April, 1850. The contributors were poor, and they found that to maintain a magazine for the purpose of expounding their views on art was likely to prove a costly affair[1]. A later periodical which, in the case of Dante Rossetti, served the same purpose was *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856). In it appeared *The Burden of Nineveh* and *The Staff and Scrip*. *The Blessed Damozel* likewise was there reprinted, with alterations, from *The Germ*. Before this time, as we have seen, Rossetti had ceased to write poetry; and with the few exceptions contained in these two magazines his poems remained unpublished. But it would be a mistake to suppose that they were therefore without influence on the work of others. They were well known in the circle of Rossetti's friends, among whom were many of the leading writers and artists of the time; and over these they exercised a fascination similar to that which Rossetti himself exercised. *The Blessed Damozel* was a kind of poetic revelation to a select band, while to the world it was still buried in *The Germ*, almost as effectually as the MS. poems were afterwards literally buried.

In 1860 Rossetti married Elizabeth Siddal, with whom he had been in love since 1850. Less than two years afterwards she

[1] I take the facts relating to *The Germ* from Mr W. M. Rossetti's preface to the reprint of that magazine.

died from the effects of an overdose of laudanum, a drug which she had been in the habit of taking to soothe her nerves. In the transport of his grief Rossetti buried the MSS. of his poems in his wife's coffin. In 1869 they were disinterred, to be published in the volume of 1870. Meanwhile, in 1861, Rossetti had published his first volume, *The Early Italian Poets*, afterwards entitled *Dante and his Circle*. The translations were "the work almost entirely of his eighteenth to his twenty-second year[1]." They were a very valuable addition to English knowledge of the Italian poets, and Rossetti was unquestionably the man best qualified to make such a contribution. It is, however, by virtue of his original poetry that Rossetti will live in English literature, and the volume of 1870 was that which first made it widely known to English readers.

In one respect it was inevitable that less than justice should be done to Rossetti. His mind was the impelling force of Pre-Raphaelitism, both in art and in literature. In painting he was certainly not the superior, and probably he was not the equal of one or two others of the Brotherhood; and yet Ruskin was undoubtedly right in declaring him to be "the chief intellectual force in the establishment of the modern Romantic School in England." He was so in art, where he was not the greatest, as well as in poetry, where few will dispute his pre-eminence in his class. He was the master of a school; but his disciples had published books before him, and he seemed to be their follower. The fact that his sister Christina Rossetti had already published two volumes is unimportant; for the differences between her and her brother are far more striking than the resemblances. But when the *Poems* of Dante Rossetti appeared, William Morris's *Defence of Guenevere* was twelve, and Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* four, years old. Both were deeply marked with the stamp of Rossetti. In the case of Swinburne the influence was an inspiration, in the case of Morris, to some extent at least, it was a misleading fire. Never afterwards do we find so much of Rossetti in Morris, and whoever compares this early volume with his later work will be struck with the absence from *The Defence of Guenevere* of his characteristic merits. Morris found himself when he

[1] W. M. Rossetti's *Memoir*, i. 214–5.

made Chaucer his master; as a Pre-Raphaelite he was not quite successful. He and Swinburne however had accustomed the public mind to a class of themes and a style of treatment the suggestion of which came from Rossetti, as the two poets themselves were generously ready to acknowledge.

To the lovers of poetry the volume of 1870 offered a rich and varied feast; and if, on the one hand, it seemed less original than it really was, on the other, the ear of readers was already attuned to it. Specimens of all that is best in the work of Rossetti, excepting only in the department of the historical ballad, are to be found there. Such completeness and maturity are very surprising if the poet's statement to Mr Hall Caine was strictly accurate, and the whole volume is to be taken as the work of a young man of twenty-five.

Such a volume, from the pen of "the chief intellectual force" of the modern romantic movement, deserved and was certain to attract attention. It was at first received with warm and general praise; but something more than a year afterwards it became the subject of a virulent attack entitled *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, published pseudonymously under the name of Thomas Maitland, but really by the poet Robert Buchanan. This most unjust criticism not only condemned Rossetti as a poetic artist, but violently denounced the moral tendency of his work; and unfortunately its effects were not ephemeral, as the effects of criticism usually are. In the long run it corroded Rossetti's mind, and threw a deeper shade of blackness upon the dark clouds that were gathering over his life. The details of this wretched story are not worth repeating now; but it is pleasant to remember that at last the assailant repented him of the evil he had wrought, and sang his recantation in the fine verses "to an old enemy" forming the dedication of his romance *God and the Man*. The gist of Buchanan's criticism was the charge of sensuality. It was exaggerated and unjust, but to say that it was wholly without foundation would be too much. Some of Rossetti's poems—e.g. *Troy Town*—are certainly not free from the taint of fleshliness. Buchanan's attack derived plausibility mainly from two sources: first, the theme of a few pieces, and especially of *Jenny*, though that is really a poem most moral in tendency; and secondly, from

the excessive sensuousness of many of the pieces. Now the presence of a sensuous element is not a fault; on the contrary, poetry not only may be, but ought to be, as Milton's well-known dictum points out, sensuous as well as simple and impassioned. But the cloying effect which Rossetti's verse produces on many readers is mainly due to an excess of what is in itself a good thing; and the excess renders it not wholly inexcusable to translate 'sensuous' into 'sensual.' Many of the poems most characteristic of him are over-wrought and luscious. *The Bride's Prelude*, *The Stream's Secret* and not a few of the sonnets of the *House of Life* are chargeable with this fault. *The Blessed Damozel* is not free from it. The effect aimed at is often attained. The sense of the sultry noonday heat and stillness is perfectly rendered in *The Bride's Prelude*; and the bride's 'tiring-chamber is described with the rich suggestiveness of a Pre-Raphaelite picture. It is

> "Like the inner altar-niche
> Whose dimness worship has made rich.
> Within the window's heaped recess
> The light was counterchanged
> In blent reflexes manifold
> From perfume-caskets of wrought gold
> And gems the bride's hair could not hold
> All thrust together: and with these
> A slim-curved lute, which now,
> At Amelotte's sudden passing there,
> Was swept in somewise unaware,
> And shook to music the close air."

The air is heavy with scent and heat; the poet has produced exactly the impression he wished to produce, and he deserves the praise due to success. But it is an air not wholesome to breathe long, and there is too much of it in Rossetti's poetry. The luscious sonnets of *The House of Life*, beautiful individually, form together a poem from which many readers are glad to escape. Take for example Sonnet XXIII, *Love's Baubles*:—

> "I stood where Love in brimming armfuls bore
> Slight wanton flowers and foolish toys of fruit:
> And round him ladies thronged in warm pursuit,
> Fingered and lipped and proffered the strange store.

> And from one hand the petal and the core
> Savoured of sleep; and cluster and curled shoot
> Seemed from another hand like shame's salute,—
> Gifts that I felt my cheek was blushing for.
> At last Love bade my Lady give the same:
> And as I looked, the dew was light thereon;
> And as I took them, at her touch they shone
> With inmost heaven-hue of the heart of flame.
> And then Love said: 'Lo! when the hand is hers,
> Follies of love are love's true ministers.'"

The thing is so beautifully done as almost to disarm criticism; and yet it is like an excessively rich food, of which a very little satisfies. The Lydian mode is not the strain to brace manhood. Of sonnets like Milton's *Massacre in Piedmont*, or Wordsworth's *Westminster Bridge*, or Drummond's *St John the Baptist*, or Keats's *Chapman's Homer*, we cannot have too many; but the sonnets of the *House of Life* are unnerving. They are frequently fanciful rather than imaginative, they tremble on the verge of conceits, they are full of literary artifice sometimes degenerating into literary trickery, the alliteration is excessive, the diction occasionally recalls the worst faults of the eighteenth century style. Thus, "the smooth black stream that makes thy whiteness fair," which means, in plain language, the ink used in writing a love-letter, is at least as bad as the "plumy people" and the "bleating kind," and the other periphrases which, a century and a half ago, were supposed to translate plain prose into poetry.

On the other hand, there is a clearness and definiteness of thought, as well as a beauty of expression, in such sonnets as *The Birth-bond* (XV), the noble *Lost Days* (LXXXVI), *A Superscription* (XCVII), and *The One Hope* (CI), which make Rossetti's position safe among the greatest of English sonnet-writers; and many other sonnets outside that poem of sonnets confirm him in that position,—*Thomas Chatterton*, *Winter*, *The Last Three from Trafalgar*. In these we find the tonic quality characteristic of poetry which is at once great and thoroughly wholesome. The blood is fired when we read of Chatterton, "with Shakespeare's manhood at a boy's

wild heart," or of the three greybeards, destined soon to greet

> "The impassioned soul which on its radiant way
> Soared through the fiery cloud of Trafalgar."

And even Wordsworth's great ode rings no clearer call to duty than *Lost Days*:—

> "The lost days of my life until to-day,
> What were they, could I see them on the street
> Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
> Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
> Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
> Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
> Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
> The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?
> I do not see them here; but after death
> God knows I know the faces I shall see,
> Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
> 'I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?'
> 'And I—and I—thyself,' (lo! each one saith,)
> 'And thou thyself to all eternity!'"

The same division can be drawn between Rossetti's other poems. On one side of the line would lie such pieces as *The Bride's Prelude*, *The Blessed Damozel*, *Staff and Scrip*, *The Stream's Secret*, *Love's Nocturn* and the major part of *The House of Life*. On the other side would lie *The Burden of Nineveh*, *The White Ship*, *The King's Tragedy*, *Stratton Water*, *Rose Mary*, *Wellington's Funeral*, *Jenny* and *A Last Confession*. The latter group presents Rossetti at his best; but it is not the Rossetti who was best known and most admired by his early followers. It is interesting to notice how considerable a proportion of the poems named as belonging to this group appeared first in the *Ballads and Sonnets* of 1881. *Rose Mary*, *Wellington's Funeral*, and the two great ballads all did so, though the poem on Wellington was of earlier composition. Evidently the inspiration of Rossetti had not failed; evidently too his poetry was gaining rather than losing in wholesomeness, though these were the years when health both of body and of mind was being undermined by the chloral habit, and when

insane suspicions of his best friends were festering in the poet's heart.

The second group of poems is distinguished from the first by the clearer evolution of a story, the more definite enunciation of a thought or the more dramatic realisation of a character. In none of the first group is there any story of importance at all; but the ballads have all a strong backbone of narrative. Of the three, only *Stratton Water* makes any attempt to imitate the old ballads; and it is the least successful. *The White Ship* and *The King's Tragedy* are frankly modern, but while they do not imitate they magnificently revivify the spirit of the ancient ballads, adding the wealth of a more complex civilisation. On the story of King James I Scott would have founded a poem far more like a popular ballad; but even he could not have held more firmly the threads of the narrative, and his poetry would have been less rich. Rossetti has done nothing better than *The King's Tragedy*. It is in respect of this element of narrative that *Rose Mary* belongs to the second group rather than to the first. In the mystical element it resembles these; but, unlike them, it moves surely and steadily on to a clearly visible goal. It is also intellectually powerful as well as æsthetically beautiful. Much the same might be said of *Sister Helen*. It likewise handles mediæval conceptions and follows the lines of mediæval models; but the passions of hatred and revenge give it a clear purpose and a dramatic interest.

Rossetti was the nineteenth-century Spirit of Art embodied. He was not either the best painter or the best poet of his time, but he was the man in whom the artistic spirit was least mingled or diluted with other things. That which was not artistic, or which did not admit of presentation from an artistic point of view, did not exist for him. His very limitations are instructive. A man of powerful intellect and of remarkable force of character, he was yet, as we have seen, absolutely indifferent to the structure of the society in which he lived, and contentedly ignorant of the greatest thoughts, if they did not appeal directly to the imagination. He never asked whether a thing was true or not; to him the important question was, is it beautiful? In his verse there is no *thought*, as such; it is all pure art. He had no cause to serve, no doctrine

to inculcate. Of him, more than of any man of his time, the words of Lecky are true. Finding his impulse in the mediævalism of the Oxford Movement, he translated it from religion into poetry. As dogma he cared not at all about it; for the beauty he cared intensely[1]. That which is beautiful is right; what is not beautiful ought not to be. He cannot be described as sceptical, like Arnold; but as little was he believing, like Newman and Pusey. He simply had not examined the questions which to them were vital. Of the Blessed Damozel it has been remarked with truth that she is the most fleshly being ever transported into paradise. It is "a spiritual *body*" (whatever that may mean) that he conceives, a being under other conditions than ours, but still a being with fleshly grace and beauty and moved by fleshly desires. There is nothing really ethereal in the Blessed Damozel. The subject, as is well known, was suggested to Rossetti by Poe's *Raven*. "I saw," he says, "that Poe had done the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and I determined to reverse the conditions, and give utterance to the yearnings of the loved one in heaven[2]." It has been generally held that Rossetti succeeded splendidly; and if this means that he wrote a fine poem, the praise is clearly due. But whether he really reversed the conditions may be questioned. He has translated into the feminine what Poe left masculine; but his Damozel is as much on earth as the hero of *The Raven*. For heaven substitute some palace of boundless wealth and magnificence, and for God and Christ two great lords of transcendent might, beneficent and worthy of reverence; and the whole poem moves on with perfect smoothness. Newman's Gerontius really leaves the body, Rossetti's Damozel is embodied still in paradise.

Because he is artistic with such singleness of mind, we get in Rossetti the best evidence available of the drift of art untrammelled and unmodified by philosophy, or science, or theology; and we find it to be strongly towards romance. But though Rossetti could

[1] It is said that on his death-bed he wished to confess to a priest. But even if it was so, no stress can be laid on the fact, for men at the point of death frequently do things quite foreign to their nature.

[2] Hall Caine's *Reminiscences*.

strip himself almost completely of all forms of thought not artistic, he could not divest himself of his historical position; and the very subjects both of his poems and of his paintings—*The Blessed Damozel* itself, and *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*—bear witness that the Oxford Movement had intervened between him and Keats, and had given to romance a new mediævalism, another tone and other themes.

When the cloud settled upon Rossetti's mind he found a devoted friend in the person of Thomas Gordon Hake (1809–1895), a fellow-poet who was also a physician; and for the sake of this association he may be briefly noticed here. Hake had before drawn Rossetti's attention by his *Vates, or the Philosophy of Madness* (1840). He learnt the art of verse with the utmost difficulty, and was an old man before he can be said to have mastered it. His best pieces are contained in *New Symbols* (1876), and perhaps the highest flight of all is *The Snake-Charmer* which is included in that volume. Hake is never great, but in this piece and in a few others he is very good; and success achieved after so many years of effort, at an age when, in the majority of cases, the spirit of poetry is dead or dying, is sufficiently remarkable to deserve attention.

In some respects the significance of Dante Rossetti's work will become plainer when we have considered that of the sister, Christina Rossetti (1830–1894), who in many ways differed widely from him, but who shared with him the love of and the gift for art. She began writing verses at the age of twelve, and from the first her compositions were carefully preserved. Some of them were privately printed in 1847, and a few, under the pseudonym Ellen Alleyn, appeared in *The Germ*; but it was not until 1862 that her first published volume, *Goblin Market, and other Poems*, appeared. *The Prince's Progress* followed in 1866, and *A Pageant* in 1887. Besides these, she published a book of nursery rhymes, and several volumes of a devotional character, of which the best is *Time Flies* (1885). There is no complete edition of her works, but the majority of her really good poems are gathered together in the two volumes entitled respectively *Poems* and *New Poems*. The latter was edited after her death by her brother, Mr W. M.

Rossetti, and consists largely of pieces which she had either not chosen to publish, or had never gathered into any volume.

There are no strongly-marked divisions in the poetry of Christina Rossetti: it has to be treated as practically all one. Even the distinction between the secular and the devotional pieces is only partially valid; for religion was so much her very being that most of her poems are misnamed 'secular.' For the same reason we cannot usefully draw any line between poems which deal with the supernatural and poems whose theme is within the limits of nature. It is true, there are some poems about ghosts, and some about the more playful supernatural of fairyland. But again, she lives so much in a realm outside the bounds of time and space, so many of her poems look beyond the grave, that this division too seems to vanish into air. It would be difficult to find any other poet who has brooded so much upon death. Her most exquisite songs are of death,—"When I am dead, my dearest," "We buried her among the flowers" and "Too late for love, too late for joy"; her "Dream-Land" is the grave. The result might have been gloomy in the extreme. It certainly is sad, but it is not gloomy; for she seems to feel easily and naturally, what so many have said without feeling, that the grave is rest, and the life beyond it a happiness unknown here.

> "Oh come the day of death, that day
> Of rest which cannot pass away!
> When the last work is wrought, the last
> Pang of pain is felt and past,
> And the blessed door made fast."

No one else of her fellow-poets in her generation has this fulness of faith. Arnold seems to set aside the idea of a second life as a mere dream; Browning reaches it through an argument in which the logic is not altogether flawless; Tennyson faintly trusts the larger hope; Dante Rossetti cares for none of these things.

Christina Rossetti's poetry, then, is nearly all in the minor key; and this is especially true of what is finest in it and of what comes most directly from her heart. *Monna Innominata*, the sonnet of sonnets in which she challenged comparison with the *Sonnets from*

the Portuguese, in contrast to Mrs Browning's sonnets, deals with a love which ends unhappily; and its burden is renunciation:—

> "Time flies, hope flags, life plies a wearied wing;
> Death following hard on life gains ground apace."

"Vanity of Vanities" is the title of the most beautiful of all her sonnets, and its teaching is that pleasure ends in sorrow, that glory brings no gain, and that so it shall be till the last trump is blown. In *Looking Forward* her cry is,

> "Pluck me no rose that groweth on a thorn,
> Nor myrtle white and cold as snow in June,
> Fit for a virgin on her marriage morn:
> But bring me poppies brimmed with sleepy death,
> And ivy choking what it garlandeth,
> And primroses that open to the moon."

Both *The Convent Threshold* and *Amor Mundi* dwell upon the ease and pleasure of the downward path and the toilsomeness of the return. The former, one of the most powerful pieces Christina Rossetti ever wrote, is a kind of John-the-Baptist call to repentance:—

> "Oh save me from a pang in heaven.
> By all the gifts we took and gave,
> Repent, repent, and be forgiven:
> This life is long, but yet it ends;
> Repent and purge your soul and save:
> No gladder song the morning stars
> Upon their birthday morning sang
> Than Angels sing when one repents."

And *Amor Mundi* is perhaps the best and completest epitome of the poetess that can be found in any single piece:—

> "'O where are you going with your love-locks flowing,
> On the west wind blowing along this valley track?'
> 'The downhill path is easy, come with me an it please ye,
> We shall escape the uphill by never turning back.'
>
> So they two went together in glowing August weather,
> The honey-breathing heather lay to their left and right;
> And dear she was to doat on, her swift feet seemed to float on
> The air like soft twin pigeons too sportive to alight.

'Oh, what is that in heaven where grey cloud-flakes are seven,
Where blackest clouds hang riven just at the rainy skirt?'
'Oh, that's a meteor sent us, a message dumb, portentous,
An undeciphered solemn signal of help or hurt.'

'Oh, what is that glides quickly where velvet flowers grow thickly,
Their scent comes rich and sickly?' 'A scaled and hooded worm.'
'Oh, what's that in the hollow, so pale I quake to follow?'
'Oh, that's a thin dead body which waits the eternal term.'

'Turn again, O my sweetest,—turn again, false and fleetest:
This beaten way thou beatest, I fear is hell's own track.'
'Nay, too steep for hill mounting; nay, too late for cost counting:
The downhill path is easy, but there's no turning back.'"

In the grandeur and gloom of this imagery there is something akin to that of Lord de Tabley's powerful *Song of Despair*. The difference between the two poets is that in De Tabley there is no *Advent* to follow the *Song of Despair*. But though to Christina Rossetti the downward path of *Amor Mundi* is "hell's own track," her last word is,

"We weep because the night is long,
We laugh for day shall rise,
We sing a slow contented song
And knock at Paradise.
Weeping we hold Him fast, Who wept
For us, we hold Him fast;
And will not let Him go except
He bless us first or last.

Weeping we hold Him fast to-night;
We will not let Him go
Till daybreak smite our wearied sight
And summer smite the snow:
The figs shall bud, and dove with dove
Shall coo the livelong day;
Then He shall say, 'Arise, My love,
My fair one, come away.'"

There is no English poet more ascetic than Christina Rossetti. She sings renunciation, not only of the love of husband and wife, as in *Monna Innominata*, but of the world and all its beauty and joys. Even the note of her devotional poems is seldom that of

triumph over death. Even in these, her cry is "Out of the Deep,"

> "Have mercy, Thou my God—mercy, my God,
> For I can hardly bear life day by day."

In *Despised and Rejected* the voice pleads till break of day, and then the footsteps lingeringly pass:—

> "So till the break of day:
> Then died away
> That voice, in silence as of sorrow;
> Then footprints echoing like a sigh
> Passed me by,
> Lingering footsteps slow to pass.
> On the morrow
> I saw upon the grass
> Each footprint marked in blood, and on my door
> The mark of blood for evermore."

This prevailing asceticism makes her poetry somewhat monotonous; but it is far less gloomy than might be imagined. Occasionally it is flecked with brighter lights. *Goblin Market* is a charming excursion into fairyland, and there are a few other cheery little pieces, like "*No, thank you, John*," scattered through the poems. *The Prince's Progress* too, notwithstanding its sad end, is lighter in tone than most of her pieces. But the exceptions are not sufficiently numerous, nor sufficiently pronounced, to change much the general complexion of her verse. The real reason why it is not oppressive is that there is in it not the least trace of a morbid spirit. Life, she thinks, is sad, but she accepts the sadness, and lives on, doing what seems to her her duty. She does not ask whether it is worth living. Her poetry does not weigh upon the spirit as *The City of Dreadful Night* does.

The exquisite purity of Christina Rossetti's style and her transparent sincerity are further reasons why her poetry altogether escapes the taint of ghoulishness. Blair and the other funereal poets of the eighteenth century have this taint. They have greater merits than they are usually credited with now; but they mouth, and the reader is tempted to suspect that they make the most, and the worst, of their theme. Not so Christina Rossetti.

Her style is simple and limpid, her diction faultless. What she says is what she feels: no one was ever more free from the vice of pretentiousness. "I question," says her brother, "her having ever once deliberated with herself whether or not she would write something or other, and then, after thinking out a subject, having proceeded to treat it in regular spells of work. Instead of this, something impelled her feelings, or 'came into her head,' and her hand obeyed the dictation[1]." This account of what Christina Rossetti actually did do exactly agrees with what we should infer from her writings that she must have done. No poet gives a stronger impression of spontaneity.

An interesting feature in Christina Rossetti's work is the wide difference between it and the work of her great brother. Of the same mixed blood, growing up under the same influences, having many friends in common, it might have been confidently predicted that the work of the two poets would present points of strong resemblance; but in fact resemblances are slight, and the differences are numerous and great. It is not only that Dante Rossetti has the more powerful intellect and the more varied interests, but his whole method is different. Christina Rossetti's style is one of the simplest ever used by an English poet; her brother's is often rich to gorgeousness. Hers is pure with the purity of clear spring water; his, like a draught compounded by some cunning alchemist, seems charged with all fragrances and flavours. She is ascetic, he is sensuous. Her face seems for ever looking beyond earth to heaven; his Blessed Damozel gazes from heaven back to earth, and her prayer is

> "Only to live as once on earth
> With Love."

The point in which it might be supposed that the brother and sister would meet is really the best proof of the deep division between them. They were both profoundly influenced by the Catholic reaction—but in ways so different. Dante Rossetti, as we have seen, was influenced by it purely as an artist: he saw the beauty of mediæval religion; its sensuousness appealed to him;

[1] Preface to *New Poems*.

it was the ally of art. But no more than the men of the Italian Renascence did he surrender his intellect to it. Christina Rossetti is the one great English poet (after Keble and Newman, if they can be called great poets) who embodied in her verse the devotional feeling which the Oxford Movement kindled. She was a devotee, and her religious poems express her veritable personal faith. There is no severance between her imagination and her intellect, between that which she admires as beautiful and that which she believes as true. Hers is the greatest body of religious verse in English since Herbert and Crashaw and Vaughan. Her poetry as a whole would be judged to be rather limited in range; but in devotional verse her range is astonishing. It has been admirably said that some of her poems, in their simplicity, seem like "the nursery songs," and others, in their splendour and exultation, like "the national hymns of Heaven[1]."

It is curious to observe that while in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century art fosters dogma, in the fifth and sixth the relation is reversed, and dogma fosters art. The historian of rationalism remarks that "the religion of one age is often the poetry of the next[2]"; and probably this is the general law. Sometimes, however, it would seem that the relation is not one-sided, but reciprocal. The rarer phenomenon is that which is exhibited in the relation between the Tractarians and the romantic literature of the early years of the nineteenth century. The romanticists were attracted to the Middle Ages; but they did not adopt mediæval opinions or share the beliefs which they unconsciously helped to spread. Newman, on the contrary, did adopt mediæval opinions, but in his writings he was as severely classical and as little romantic as any great master of English prose. One type of mind borrows from the Middle Ages romance, another borrows religion; and it would seem to be difficult to hold in fusion in the same mind both elements of mediævalism—to unite sympathy in the imagination with assent in the understanding.

This idea is confirmed by what may be observed with respect

[1] Lionel Johnson, quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism*, viii. 273.

[2] Lecky, *Rise of Rationalism*, i. 260.

to the Pre-Raphaelites. That mediævalism which Newman used to buttress dogma becomes in them the prop of art. There were exceptions: Coventry Patmore and Christina Rossetti not only cherished the sentiment, but held the opinions with which it was associated. But this does not seem to have been the case with the Pre-Raphaelites in general: it was certainly not the case with Dante Rossetti. Their art was their religion; and if occasionally they gave an apparently fervid expression to the Catholic feeling, it was more for the sake of the artistic beauty of that feeling than for the dogma. Thus they support also Lecky's argument that the change which he points out is part of the process of the decay of religion: "Religious ideas die like the sun; their last rays, having little heat, are expended in creating beauty[1]."

The conclusion seems to be that there is some natural affinity but no necessary connexion between romance and Catholicism. Romance feeds upon mystery, and Catholicism supplies the food liberally; but there are other things which supply it also. Both happen to be united in the Middle Ages; and mediævalism is the true meeting-ground of the very diverse spirits who were brought together by the convergence of the romantic and the Catholic lines of thought and feeling.

Thomas Woolner (1825–1892) was another member of the Brotherhood who cultivated poetry as well as what is more specifically called 'art.' In his case the former is distinctly subordinate; but the very vituperation which the Brotherhood originally encountered has led by reaction to an even exaggerated recognition of its merits. The lyrical poem, *My Beautiful Lady*, part of which was originally printed in *The Germ*, is loosely compacted, and is ingenious and talented, rather than convincingly poetical. Neither does the blank-verse *Pygmalion* (1881), or *Silenus* (1884), or *Tiresias* (1886) vindicate Woolner's title to be treated seriously as a poet. There is far more power and genuine inspiration in the verse of William Bell Scott (1812–1890) whose interesting *Autobiographical Notes* show such a mastery of "the gentle art of making enemies," that it is not surprising if he has won less recognition than his worth and weight deserve. As there was always more than

[1] Lecky, *Rise of Rationalism*, i. 261.

enough of gall in Scott's ink, those whom he offended either in their proper person or through their friends have either ignored him, or have viewed him through clouded glasses.

But for his association with the Brotherhood Scott would be best considered along with the philosophical poets of the earlier period; for he belongs to an earlier date than the Pre-Raphaelites, he was very little influenced by them, and his work in verse is rather distinguished for weight of thought than for grace of form. He had published poetry in the thirties, but his earliest notable work was *The Year of the World* (1846), an allegorical epic in five books, tracing the development of religion "from the golden age in the Garden of Eden, the period of instinct and innocence, to the end of the race, when, all the adverse powers of nature subjugated, man will have attained a happy and quiescent immortality[1]." This sense of victory over nature is characteristic of the time (cf. *Locksley Hall*), the confidence in general but indefinite progress is a special note of Scott.

Shortly after the appearance of *The Year of the World* Scott became acquainted with Rossetti, and naturally his *Poems by a Painter* (1854) are in some degree influenced by the association. Not, however, profoundly; for from the first Scott looked with a critical eye upon Pre-Raphaelitism and, secretly or openly, held a poor opinion of many of its works. He speaks somewhat contemptuously of Rossetti's early paintings; and of Coventry Patmore's *Tamerton Church Towers* he remarks caustically that it belongs to that class of poems "that have no good reason for existence[2]." More than twenty years elapsed before *Poems by a Painter* was followed by Scott's next volume of verse, *Ballads, Studies from Nature, Sonnets* (1875). Finally, *A Poet's Harvest Home* (1882) gathered up the work of his old age.

All through, Scott's poetry is thoughtful and philosophic. *The Sphinx*, perhaps the best of all his writings, is, like *The Year of the World*, at once metaphysical and religious, treating the Sphinx as the symbol of religious mystery. And Scott has the power of thinking to some purpose. What he cannot do is to make his thought musical. If the style and versification were

[1] *Autobiography*, i. 236. [2] *ibid.* i. 252.

not so often harsh, he would go near to being a great poet; and, faulty as they are, he is a more considerable one than he is commonly reputed to be.

Sir J. Noel Paton (1821–1901) was yet another of the poet-painters, whose *Poems by a Painter* (1861) and *Spindrift* (1867) have that charm of style and that mastery of rhythm which are lacking in Scott's. Probably Paton's work in the mass has hardly vitality enough to keep it permanently in remembrance, but it may be hoped that future anthologies will find a place for such gems as the lovely song,

"There is a wail in the wind to-night,
A dirge in the plashing rain,
That brings old yearnings round my heart,
Old dreams into my brain,
As I gaze into the wintry dark
Through the blurred and blackened pane:
Far memories of golden hours
That will not come again,—
Alas!
That never will come again.

Wild woodland odours wander by—
Warm breath of new-mown hay—
I hear the broad, brown river flow,
Half-hid in bowering may;
While eyes of love look through my soul,
As on that last sweet day;
But a chilly shadow floats between
That will not pass away—
Ah, no!
That never will pass away."

Coventry Patmore (1823–1896), is another writer affiliated to the Rossetti group, but he wears his rue with a difference. Patmore was a man who took himself very seriously, and who was taken seriously by others whose judgment commands respect; and yet there is probably no other nineteenth-century poet of equal reputation whose permanent position in literature is so insecure. Neither his first volume of poems, which was published in 1844, nor his *Tamerton Church Tower* (1853) won great fame; but

with *The Angel in the House* (1854–1856) he was supposed to take his place among the greater poets. The success was perhaps partly due to the fluency of the poem. This fluency was a gift dangerous to the poet. "I have frequently," says his friend and admirer, the late Dr Richard Garnett, "seen twenty or more lines which he had written, he said, within the last half-hour, and refashioning was rarely needful[1]." If "fluent Shakespeare" effaced too little, surely fluent Patmore sinned far more deeply in the same way. Another reason for the success was perhaps the poet's own self-complacency. He announces with great satisfaction that he, one of the latest of poets, has found "the first of themes sung last of all." The fact that this first of themes had never before been sung would have put a less confident man on his guard; and the need of caution is shown by the fact that Patmore himself never sang it. His poem was to be a celebration of wedded love; but the first part did not get beyond *The Betrothal*, the second part stopped with *The Espousals*; and when *Faithful for Ever* (1860) appeared, even partisans of Patmore admitted that the quality fell, and Rossetti (an admirer to an extent surprising in one so virile) caustically asked in a letter to Allingham, "'Of love which never finds its published close, what sequel?' And how many?" There was one more "sequel," *The Victories of Love* (1863); but Patmore never carried out the design he had planned. The explanation, of course, was that "the first of themes" was not really a fit theme for poetry on the great scale. On the contrary, its singular unfitness is shown by the withering ridicule of the parody in Swinburne's *Heptalogia*, the very headings of which—the Monthly Nurse, the Caudle, the Kid—are sufficient. *Hamlet* has been parodied, and is none the worse; but *The Angel in the House* could not stand such treatment.

The pursuit of this will-o'-the-wisp had consumed many years of Patmore's life, and what was even worse, it had fostered some inherent weaknesses. He could undoubtedly express himself with pointed sententiousness, and his satiric wit is attested by an epigram the effectiveness of which will be felt by all who are old

[1] Quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism*.

enough to remember the telegrams of the first German Emperor, announcing victory after victory over the French:—

> "This is to say, my dear Augusta,
> We've had another awful buster:
> Ten thousand Frenchmen sent below!
> Thank God from whom all blessings flow[1]."

His felicity of phrase is illustrated over and over again in the happier passages of *The Angel in the House*. But the subject tempted him to prolixity, and to a triviality or even a childishness of treatment which goes far to annul his merits. The effect is similar to that which Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction exercised upon him; but for two reasons it is likely to be much greater. In the first place, it will hardly be denied that Wordsworth's best is incomparably finer than Patmore's best; and in the second place, Wordsworth's *Goody Blakes* and *Idiot Boys* are separable, while Patmore's banalities are integral parts of *The Angel in the House*.

Probably Patmore was secretly conscious of the gravity of the error into which he had fallen; for when he had shaken off the incubus of a theme which refused to be handled, he made his next venture anonymously in a style as unlike it as possible. In the *Odes* (1868) and *The Unknown Eros* (1877) few would detect the hand of the author of *The Angel in the House*. Their complex metrical forms are far removed from the simple rhythm of that work, and they demand a corresponding stateliness of style which saves Patmore from the pitfalls into which he had slid so readily. It would be too much to say that he has been uniformly successful in avoiding other faults. Sometimes, perhaps, the thought is hardly great enough to correspond with the stateliness of the form and expression; sometimes the meaning is far from clear. But almost always he shows great technical skill, and in his greatest poem, *Amelia* (1878), he fills in the masterly scheme with a content not unworthy of it.

[1] This is the form in which it is given in Champneys's *Life of Patmore*: another form substitutes for "This is to say," the words, "By will divine," which are better and more in character with the Emperor, but apparently not authentic.

§ 4. *The Spasmodic Poets.*

A nickname which 'sticks' usually does so by reason of its wit, or its truth, or of both; and the instructive wit of the adjective 'spasmodic,' applied by W. E. Aytoun to another group of poets who made their appearance about the middle of the century, has won for it universal acceptance. Who exactly were the spasmodic poets Aytoun was not concerned to define; but his admirable burlesque, *Firmilian* (1854), leaves no doubt possible as to the meaning of the word. The charm of *Firmilian* is that the ridicule sometimes gives place to poetry, and that along with a travesty of the faults of the spasmodic poets we get some insight into their genuine worth. What Aytoun condemned in them was the confusion and inequality and extravagance of their work, its passion piled on passion, its thought disjointed from thought, the rant and fustian of the style, the lavishly sprinkled and over-wrought metaphors. Hence the student of Badajoz rants and raves, commits crimes and makes himself absurd. But Aytoun knew also that if the spasmodic poets were mad, there was method in their madness; if they were formless, there was poetry in the *disjecta membra* of their verse. They themselves were manly and sensible men too. Though *Firmilian* was one of the keenest parodies ever written, Sydney Dobell, the chief victim, read it with delight and praised it heartily and generously. There is a pleasant story about the first meeting between the poet and his critic. Dobell had previously written under the pseudonym of Sydney Yendys, and Aytoun had caricatured him in *Blackwood*, in the somewhat broad fashion of the time, under the name of Gander Redney. They were introduced by J. Young Simpson, the great physician. "Aytoun," says Dobell, "looked puzzled and amused, and was profoundly polite, but was obliged to follow the ladies of his party, who had already left the room. I stepped after him, and clapping him on the shoulder, said, 'The Dr. did not introduce us perfectly just now —he omitted some of my styles and titles—*you* probably know me better as Gander Redney.' How his eyes twinkled! and Simpson told me afterwards that at the bottom of the stairs he told the

story with roars of laughter[1]." There is hope both for the satirist and his victim, both for the critic and the poet, when such things are possible.

It might be contended with some show of reason that the greatest of all the spasmodic poets was Tennyson; for *Maud* is just a very fine example of many of the faults and of more than all the merits of their work. But if *Maud* suggests his inclusion among them, *In Memoriam*, with all the mass of his other poetry, makes it impossible. Bailey, the author of *Festus*, has frequently been classed as 'spasmodic'; but it hardly required his own protest to show how baseless is such a classification. Those whom Aytoun had chiefly in mind were undoubtedly Dobell and Alexander Smith. The only other writer in whom the same characteristics are specially marked was John Stanyan Bigg (1828–1865), a man of less power and importance, whose principal works were a poetical romance, *The Sea-King* (1848), and a poem, *Night and the Soul* (1854), whose very title is suggestive of the qualities of the spasmodic poets.

In several respects the destiny of those poets was peculiar and sad. The lives of all of them were short, Dobell, the first born and the last survivor of the band, reaching only the age of fifty. Their splendid gifts were balanced by faults and defects almost equally great. They rose to fame almost as rapidly as Byron; but their short summer of extravagant praise was followed by a long winter of neglect and depreciation still more unmerited.

Sydney Dobell (1824–1874) was the most gifted man of the three. His work, both for good and for evil, bears traces of his personal history, and a brief biographic sketch is the best introduction to his poetry. He was born at Cranbrook in Kent, whence the family migrated twelve years later to Cheltenham. His father was a wine-merchant, and so in after years was the poet himself. But the important thing to notice is the spiritual atmosphere which he breathed in childhood and youth. Both his father, and, still more, his maternal grandfather, were men interested in many things besides business. John Dobell was a student of political and social problems, and wrote a pamphlet

[1] *Life and Letters of Dobell*, i. 342.

which is said to show considerable power, entitled *Man unfit to govern Man.* But it was the grandfather, Samuel Thompson, who stamped his character on the family. He was the founder of one of those small and earnest religious sects which nowhere flourish so much as among the Anglo-Saxon communities on both sides of the Atlantic. These sects are generally narrow in their creed, but Thompson's was broad. Its official designation was "the Church of God," but the members accepted as accurately descriptive the name popularly given to them, "Free-thinking Christians." They were very few in number, and in spite of the essential liberality of their opinions, they were not free from the bigotries usual among small sects. Thus they held that the Anglican marriage service was idolatrous; and as it was necessary at that date to submit to it, Dobell's parents were married under protest. They also discouraged social relations with those who were not members of the church. As time went on they seem to have become gradually more exclusive, and the founder, Samuel Thompson himself, had the singular experience of being expelled from the church of his own creation.

At an early age young Dobell gave evidence of remarkable powers, and, to his misfortune, he was looked upon as a rising apostle of his grandfather's church—not merely as *a* pillar, but as *the* pillar. The position was a dangerous one, and few boys could have sniffed the fumes of frankincense for so many years with so little injury. Dobell came through the trial with a nature unspoilt but not uninfluenced. To this cause we may attribute his overweening confidence in himself, and perhaps too his utter want of the power of self-criticism. To this cause likewise is due the fact that the education he received was wholly private; for there was no school or university in England which could be trusted to train the future leader of "the Church of God." Further, the continuous strain of religious emotion told with fatal effect upon his nerves and helped to bring about that ill-health which shortened his life and which practically closed his poetical career long before his death. Naturally Dobell grew out of this church; and not unnaturally he found himself disqualified or indisposed for membership of any other religious body. He was a deeply

religious man, but in his more mature years he held aloof from all churches and sects.

Dobell inherited an interest in political questions as well as an interest in religion; and while the effects of religion upon his poetry, except in *Balder*, are mainly indirect, those of politics are direct and obvious. If it were necessary to describe him in a single phrase he might best be called the poet of political liberty. *The Roman*, *The Magyar's New-Year-Eve* and *The Youth of England to Garibaldi's Legion* are all inspired by this feeling; and though the *Sonnets on the War* and *England in Time of War* are more martial, the sense that the Crimean War was a struggle between autocracy and free government was never absent from Dobell's mind.

The fact that Dobell's early manhood fell at the time of the rising of the nations against the kings did much to foster this feeling. Italy was shaking her chains, Hungary was struggling for freedom. It was especially the Italian struggle which stirred the English imagination. The beauty and attractiveness of Italy combined with her old renown to fix attention upon her. From the time of Chaucer she had been a nursing mother to English poetical genius. In the recent past, the names of Byron, Shelley and Keats were specially linked with Italy; at the time of the revolutionary movements two of the most prominent English poets were resident there. Dobell was warm and eager in the cause of Italy; and in 1848 and 1849 he wrote his fervid and rhetorical dramatic poem, *The Roman* (1850), which was received with a chorus of applause so enthusiastic as to fix Dobell's career: he was to be a poet.

The success of *The Roman* had other consequences as well. It made the friends of Italy who were then in England turn to Dobell as the man who had best expressed their aspirations; and at his residence, Coxhorne, near Cheltenham, was born the society afterwards known as "the society of the friends of Italy." But he bewildered the poor Italians who resorted to him by objecting that, noble as their mission was, it was "too political and worldly" for him. Very likely Dobell was right: he had a good deal of practical shrewdness. And yet one must sympathise with the

revolutionaries. The poet was fervid to the verge of incoherency in the national cause. He could create for his closet drama an eloquent monk, and depict him firing with his enthusiasm fair maidens, worn matrons and grey-haired fathers. But the monk would not step out from the pages of the book; and Dobell had nothing practical to substitute for those plans which he condemned as "too political and worldly." Afterwards however he became enthusiastically hopeful about Mazzini, who was so little hopeful about himself. And however scanty fruit in practice Dobell's zeal bore, the poet himself would have been something widely different but for this great enthusiasm, just as Campbell would have been widely different but for his zeal in the cause of Poland.

Four years after *The Roman* Dobell published a second and still more ambitious poem, *Balder*. In a note to the second edition of *The Roman*, the author modestly disclaims the title of 'poem' for that work. "The words 'Dramatic Poem' in the title are not mine," he says. "'Poetry' and 'A Poem' are not necessarily aequipollents. In the next few years I hope to write more 'Poetry'; ten years hence, if God please, A POEM." Before ten years were over his career was practically ended; and soon after he wrote these words he must have changed his mind. The vast design of *Balder* could only have been conceived by one ambitious to write 'a poem,' and convinced of his power to do it. The poem was to consist of three parts, and the principal subject of it was to be, as Dobell explained in the prefatory note to the second edition, "the progress of a Human Being from Doubt to Faith, from Chaos to Order. Not of Doubt incarnate to Faith incarnate, but of a doubtful mind to a faithful mind." Only the first part was ever written, and *Balder* therefore remains a fragment. It closes, not in the radiance of faith triumphant, but in the deepest gloom of doubt sinking into despair.

Balder was less favourably received than *The Roman* had been; and many critics, treating as a whole what was meant only to be a part, condemned the entire conception. It cannot be denied that *Balder* gives ample ground for unfavourable criticism.

Of all Dobell's works it is the most unequal. It contains both the best poetry and the worst he ever wrote; and the worst is almost incredibly bad. It is perplexing and incoherent. Allowance must be made for its fragmentary character; but the doubt will rise whether the plan was capable of being carried to completion. At any rate, while Dobell proposed to trace the progress of a man from chaos to order, he unfortunately left him still in chaos. Yet, notwithstanding defects of the gravest kind, a candid criticism must recognise that, in the four years which intervened between *The Roman* and *Balder*, Dobell had made immense progress; not in construction, and not in the power to discriminate between true poetry and worthless rubbish, but in weight of thought and reach of imagination. The rhetorical glitter of *The Roman* is gone, the bombastic note is only occasionally heard; their place is taken by a powerful and daring though irregular imagination.

Balder has been compared by more than one critic to Ibsen's *Brand*; and there are some very remarkable points of resemblance between the two works. The relations of husband, wife and child are closely similar—though in Ibsen's drama the child only enters as an influence from the past. On the other hand, there is obviously a pretty wide difference between "the splendid dreamer, the philanthropic nineteenth century pagan," as Dobell called his own hero, and the fanatic Brand of Ibsen. Another poem which *Balder* resembles in its general scheme is *Paracelsus*. Obviously the search after Knowledge undertaken by Paracelsus, with the discovery that Knowledge alone is unsatisfying and that Love must be added, is not unlike the life-voyage from Doubt to Faith which Dobell meant to trace.

Dobell had married in 1844, and his wife, like himself, was almost constantly in delicate health. They took turns, it has been said, to nurse one another out of their numerous illnesses. Partly that Mrs Dobell might have the benefit of the excellent medical advice it afforded, and partly for the sake of the intellectual stimulus it promised, the Dobells moved in 1854 to Edinburgh, which remained their home for about four years. Thither Dobell attracted his fellow-poet, Alexander Smith (1829–1867), the son of a pattern-designer of Kilmarnock, Ayrshire. Previous to his

removal to Edinburgh Smith resided at Glasgow, a city which he has celebrated in what is probably the very finest of his poems; and the year before Dobell's arrival he, a young man of twenty-four, had taken the world by storm with his *Life Drama*. The critics were by no means unanimous about this piece; but the difference of opinion among them had only the effect of strengthening the interest generally felt in the author. Dobell was among the enthusiasts. Feeling not only that this was a new poet, but that he was one akin to himself, he sought Smith's acquaintance, and his presence in Edinburgh was an inducement to Smith to migrate.

The society of Edinburgh was, in the fifties, still a society of no inconsiderable distinction, and the two poets were among the men who gave it a kind of after-glow of glory. The great age was past. Scott was gone, and Hogg; Jeffrey had only recently died; Lockhart had long ago drifted away; and both he and Christopher North passed to the universal bourne in the very year when Dobell first came to the city they had roused and shaken by their youthful frolics. In the same year died the shrewdly-observant Lord Cockburn, one of the last of the Scottish gentlemen of the old school. Carlyle, a brief sojourner, had carried his fervour and his dyspeptic gloom first to Craigenputtock, and afterwards to London. But Sir William Hamilton was still the philosophic chief, and the figure of Hugh Miller was still to be seen in the streets. Dr John Brown too walked there, intent upon his business of healing, yet with a watchful and observant eye on the dogs. Ferrier was an occasional visitor; and among the residents was the boisterously genial John Stuart Blackie, picturesque even then, though perhaps less so than he afterwards became with his plaid and his long waving silver hair. There too was William Edmondstoune Aytoun, whom Dobell met so good-naturedly. It was a pleasant and a witty society. The mirth of it is attested by *Firmilian*, by the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*, and by the raciness which still characterised *Blackwood's Magazine*. It was, moreover, a society which, down to that date, retained the stimulus of immemorial associations and of historic names, not yet whirled away to the great vortex of London. Dobell's imagination was captivated

by this, which was an aspect of society hitherto unfamiliar to him. He tells how, sitting at dinner, he heard that Lord Something Douglas, sitting at the same table, was a lineal descendant of the Douglas who started to bear the heart of Bruce to Palestine. Dobell expressed his interest. "What will you say to me, then?" said the lady who sat by his side, "for I'm the lineal descendant of the Bruce himself." The surroundings were thoroughly congenial to Dobell, and the three years he spent in Edinburgh were among the happiest and the most active of his life.

The Crimean War supplied the theme of his next two volumes, *Sonnets on the War* (1855) (in conjunction with Smith), and *England in Time of War* (1856). The *Sonnets on the War* are on the whole disappointing. Smith was hurried into collaboration by the influence of Dobell and by the contagion of the prevailing warlike spirit; but he was not by nature a martial poet, and his contributions lower the tone. In Dobell however, as he had already proved in *The Roman*, the martial spirit was inborn. His *England in Time of War* contains the magnificent *Evening Dream*. It also contains much besides martial verse, including among other pieces the finest thing he ever wrote, the weird and haunting ballad, *Keith of Ravelston*. Two fine sonnets based upon rumours that America would join the conflict deserve to be quoted for the sake of their theme and substance as well as for their beauty:—

"Men say, Columbia, we shall hear thy guns.
But in what tongue shall be thy battle-cry?
Not that our sires did love in years gone by,
When all the Pilgrim Fathers were little sons
In merrie homes of Englaunde? Back, and see
Thy satchelled ancestor! Behold, he runs
To mine, and, clasped, they tread the equal lea
To the same village-school, where, side by side,
They spell 'our Father.' Hard by, the twin-pride
Of that grey hall whose ancient oriel gleams
Thro' yon baronial pines, with looks of light
Our sister-mothers sit beneath one tree.
Meanwhile our Shakespeare wanders past and dreams
His Helena and Hermia. Shall we fight?

Nor force nor fraud shall sunder us! Oh ye
Who north or south, on east or western land,
Native to noble sounds, say truth for truth,
Freedom for freedom, love for love, and God
For God; Oh ye who in eternal youth
Speak with a living and creative flood
This universal English, and do stand
Its breathing book; live worthy of that grand
Heroic utterance—parted, yet a whole,
Far, yet unsevered,—children brave and free
Of the great Mother-tongue, and ye shall be
Lords of an empire wide as Shakespeare's soul,
Sublime as Milton's immemorial theme,
And rich as Chaucer's speech, and fair as Spenser's dream."

When *England in Time of War* was published Dobell was still only thirty-two, and it seemed as if his career was just opening. In reality it was near its close. His health grew worse. The northern climate was trying, and in 1857 he left Edinburgh. In the following year he wrote *The Magyar's New-Year-Eve*, and in 1860 *The Youth of England to Garibaldi's Legion*, both stirring and impressive pieces. But he was advised to spare himself the strain of composition; and though from time to time he wrote some fugitive pieces, chiefly sonnets, his subsequent verse is meagre in quantity, and in quality is nowhere equal to the best he had previously written. Debarred from poetry, he turned again to business, and his ever-restless mind led him to try the system of coöperation, of which he was one of the pioneers in England. Two accidents, one in 1866 and the other in 1869, shattered his already precarious health, rendered him less fit than ever for work, and hastened his death in 1874.

Dobell is a poet whom it is not easy to appraise. On the one hand, there is none to whom more must be forgiven; and the reader who is irritated by his gross violations of taste, and his almost incredible lapses from poetry and even from sense, will be inclined to resent any praise whatsoever. Unfortunately Dobell seems scarcely to have tried to discriminate his own best from his worst. Perhaps he held too strongly that poetry ought to be spontaneous. Some of his boyish work was submitted for criticism

to the poet Campbell, who pronounced that "with care there was no doubt of his becoming a poet"; and the biographer tells us that "later in life the notion of a 'poet' made 'with care' appealed strongly to" Dobell's "sense of the ridiculous[1]." Milton thought that no kind of man had to be 'made' with greater care than a poet; and it would have been well had Campbell's warning been seriously taken to heart. But Dobell thought that "poetry should roll from the heart as tears from the eyes—unbidden[2]"; and so he never checked the flow when it came unbidden. "What I have written I have written," he says of himself[3]. He was of opinion that a work of youth could not be revised a few years later without the risk of introducing incongruities. Whether he was right, or Horace, who thought that the poet should keep his work unpublished for nine years, and Tennyson, who tirelessly tinkered his youthful verse, the writings of the three men sufficiently prove. "He never weeded his garden," wrote Dr John Brown, "and will, I fear, be therefore strangled in his waste fertility."

In another respect Dobell does more than any enemy could do to his own hurt. Hardly anyone so frequently as he challenges damaging comparisons. He seems to do it in mere wantonness; no doubt under the belief that he was not merely capable of great things, wherein he was right, but of the greatest, wherein he was wrong. For example, he has a piece in *The Roman* on the Coliseum, which naturally suggests Byron's stanzas; and another in *Balder* on Chamouni, inevitably bringing to mind Coleridge's magnificent hymn. The test is cruelly severe, and Dobell suffers under it. Again, in *The Youth of England to Garibaldi's Legion*, he seems to go out of his way in order to force comparison with *The Isles of Greece*; and once more it is to his own detriment. It is not plagiarism: Dobell's mind was far too forcible and fertile for that. It would seem rather to spring from an unmeasured confidence in himself.

And yet, on the other hand, whoever will bear with his faults must in the long run find the poetry of Dobell both attractive and stimulating. He is all compact of thought, and in his

[1] *Life of Dobell*, i. 46. [2] *ibid.* i. 133.
[3] Note to the 2nd edition of *The Roman*.

moments of true inspiration he handles the greatest themes with masterly ease. In his company we breathe "an ampler ether, a diviner air," than any but the few leaders of men can create. It is true he thought and wrote by spasms, but there is a magnificent energy in these spasms.

Though Alexander Smith is, rightly enough, classed with Dobell as a member of the Spasmodic School, the two were, both as poets and as men, widely different. It is unnecessary to dwell on Smith's biography, for there is little in it, such as there is in Dobell's, to throw light on his work. He has himself told with great charm what is essential in the story in his almost forgotten novel, *Alfred Hagart's Household* (1866). For Smith wrote prose as well as verse with much grace. In addition to the story just named, he wrote *Dreamthorp* (1863), a volume of essays still worth reading for their sympathetic pictures of the country, their pleasant chatty criticism, and, above all, for the sake of a wonderful passage in the essay entitled *A Lark's Flight*, where Smith rises to the level of the greatest writers of prose. He wrote also *A Summer in Skye* (1865), in which he caught the charm of Highland scenery as scarcely anyone has done before or since.

Smith's poetry is principally contained in three volumes, *Poems* (1853), *City Poems* (1857) and *Edwin of Deira* (1861). In its main outlines his poetical career was an exact reproduction of Dobell's. There was the same brilliant reception, the same flagging enthusiasm as the years went on, and the same untimely close. Smith was cut off when he was scarcely past his youth, and even of his short life the last two years were almost blank because of ill-health. The *Life Drama* at once awoke a controversy which was never completely silenced so long as Smith continued to write. The poet was accused of plagiarism; but the charge, annoying as it was, served only to draw attention to the poem and to make it more popular. An accusation of deliberate literary pilfering can seldom be justified. In Smith's case there was neither intentional dishonesty nor lack of power and originality; but he seems to have had a mind of the sort which sub-consciously retains what it reads, and unwittingly reproduces some kind of echo of it. Such echoes are frequent in his verse;

but in spite of that, his best pieces are poems, not mere bundles of quotations, out of which no true poem was ever yet built. There needs but a reference to *Glasgow*, or to the companion picture of *Edinburgh*, or to some of the sonnets, to reduce to its true proportions the charge of plagiarism. There may be reminiscences of earlier writers in these pieces, but Alexander Smith was their author.

City Poems disappointed those who had hailed the new writer as a rival of Tennyson; but the fault was in the readers rather than in Smith, whose best work is in this volume. The verse is still overloaded with metaphor, and the style is often strained; but on the other hand there are numerous happy lines and phrases, and bits of description touched with high imagination, as for instance:—

> "Through the rifts of ruin sternly gleamed
> An apparition of grey windy crag,
> Black leagues of forest roaring like a sea,
> And far lands dim with rain."

The best examples of Smith's work in this kind are however to be found in the Blaaven sonnets. The scenery of Skye, in which his marriage with a Flora MacDonald of that island gave him a personal interest, stirred his imagination as scarcely anything else ever did; and some of his finest work, in verse as well as in the prose volume already mentioned, is associated with it. But perhaps the very highest point Smith ever reached is attained in *Glasgow*, a picture of a great city as imaginative as any that has ever been painted. There is the magnificence of Turner in the colouring. The poem belongs to the days when Smith had not yet that familiarity with the country which he shows in *Dreamthorp* and in *A Summer in Skye*. But *poeta nascitur*, and in *Glasgow* Smith proves that breadth of experience is not indispensable. In it he frankly avows the limits of his knowledge, and proclaims himself a son of the city:—

> "City! I am true son of thine;
> Ne'er dwelt I where great mornings shine
> Around the bleating pens;

Ne'er by the rivulets I strayed,
And ne'er upon my childhood weighed
The silence of the glens.
Instead of shores where ocean beats,
I hear the ebb and flow of streets."

But if he had limited experience he had the gift of imaginative sympathy; and one of the great charms of the poem is its suggestion of the contrast between the beauty of "trailing showers and breezy downs," and that other beauty which dwells in "the tragic heart of towns." In a different key, but almost as fine as the poem on Glasgow, is the lyric *Barbara*, in *Horton*. It is not free from the 'spasmodic' faults, but the wistful melancholy of the closing stanzas gives them a rare beauty.

There was more ground for disappointment with *Edwin of Deira*; but, oddly enough, the critics received it more favourably. It is a poem of epic form founded upon a story of Saxon times; and, though it has fewer faults than the *Life Drama*, it is not so clear that it has more or higher beauties. Many passages are diffuse and weak, few rise to distinction, and the poem fails to impress itself upon the memory. A comparison of it with *City Poems* suggests that Smith's strength lay in the lyric and in short narrative or introspective pieces. Had he left a considerable body of verse of the type of *Glasgow* and *Barbara* and *Squire Maurice* and *The Night before the Wedding*, his name would have been great.

Dobell, before his acquaintance with Smith began, drew a contrast between himself and his future friend and comrade in words which exactly hit the truth about them both. "Somebody," he says,—"Samuel Brown, I think—said of me that I was '*mere Thought*.' Alexander is *sensuous* beyond even Keatsian intensity[1]." In its root-principle the poetic work of the one is widely different from that of the other, and they are bound together rather by the presence of common faults than by the possession of common merits. Dobell is spasmodically intellectual, Smith spasmodically sensuous. Both are frequently extravagant and tasteless and turgid in style; both are prone to "tear a passion to tatters."

[1] *Life of Dobell*, i. 243-4.

But when Dobell is good, he is good from force of mind; when Smith is good, it is because of that sensitiveness which enabled him to divine nature before he had well seen her. Another criticism of Smith may be quoted, as much for what is mistaken in it as for what is true. "The antecedents of the *Life Drama*," says Clough, "the one long poem which occupies almost the whole of his volume, are to be found in the *Princess*, in parts of Mrs Browning, in the love of Keats, and in the *habit* of Shakespeare. There is no Pope, or Dryden, or even Milton; no Wordsworth, Scott, or even Byron to speak of[1]." Except in one important point this is sound. There is in Smith more of Keats than of anyone else; but there is also, in spirit rather than in phraseology, a good deal of Byron. In fact, the Spasmodic School may be defined as a blend of Keats with Byron, differences within it depending upon the proportions in which the ingredients are mixed. Dobell leans towards Byron, Smith leans towards Keats.

[1] Clough's *Prose Remains*.

CHAPTER VII

LATER DEVELOPMENTS

THE Oxford poets left no successors, except in so far as Mr William Watson may be considered the successor and disciple of Matthew Arnold. The Spasmodic School died with Dobell. The faults indicated by the nickname are perennial in literature; but Dobell and Smith transmitted their beauties to no one; perhaps because those beauties were too fragmentary and too closely associated with imperfection to be transmissible. Only the Pre-Raphaelite group left a poetical progeny: it was they and Tennyson who jointly moulded poetry in the sixties and seventies. Over their work, however, there gradually passes a change, which has been noted in Tennyson himself, in the development from *Locksley Hall* to *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, in the firmer grip of reality and the more rugged style. In William Morris this shows itself in the change from pure mediævalism to the eminently modern note of *Chants for Socialists*. This phase of poetry is derived from Carlyle and those other writers who in the middle of the century urged so insistently the social problems which the industrial revolution was gradually forcing upon the attention of men. Another offshoot is the work of the group of writers who found their themes in the slums of great cities, and who would prepare the way for improvement by first showing the facts in their ugliness. There is also a continuance and a further development of that spirit of nationality which has been illustrated in Dobell; but this is independent—

not derived from him, but the outgrowth of the facts which inspired him. It manifests itself in various ways; in the poetry of the Celtic Revival; in the growing interest in Scandinavian myths and legends; in the beginnings of English imperialism, of which Mr Rudyard Kipling has latterly been the most eloquent mouthpiece.

§ 1. *The later Pre-Raphaelites and their Kin.*

The first poet of note who worked in the spirit of Rossetti was William Morris (1834–1896), a man of multifarious activity, whose work, even when it is least literary, throws a powerful light upon the conditions under which modern literature is produced, and upon the forces which mould the mind of the man of letters. "'Poet, artist, manufacturer, and socialist, author of *The Earthly Paradise*':—this terse unimpassioned entry in the *Fasti Britannici* sums up, in a form of words which he would himself have accepted as substantially accurate, the life and work of a remarkable man." With these words the biographer of Morris opens the story of his life; and in "this terse unimpassioned entry" we shall find the reason why Morris deserves close attention as a man, no less than as a writer. The life of Morris is an epitome of what Carlyle and Ruskin, Maurice and Kingsley were teaching; and he shows in his own person, better than anyone else, how that democracy which in 1832 began to find its footing in English politics affected every form of intellectual activity. It will not therefore be amiss to consider the question how he who is described by a college friend as one whose "manners and tastes and sympathies were all aristocratic[1]," came to be not only a "manufacturer and socialist," but the man of many crafts, whose hands often bore the tints of the dyes among which he worked, or the grime of the tools he handled.

William Morris was sent first to Marlborough, and then, after an interval under a private tutor, to Exeter College, Oxford, where he soon struck up a close friendship with Edward Burne-

[1] R. W. Dixon, quoted in Mackail's *Life of Morris*, i. 46.

Jones, who was afterwards so intimately associated with him in his artistic work. Both looked towards the Church as their profession, and both were afterwards diverted from it by the more powerful attractions of art. Ten or fifteen years earlier they would almost certainly have taken orders; but the Oxford of the fifties had lost the fervour which distinguished its theological discussions prior to the secession of Newman. Moreover, in the case of Morris, other influences sprang up to modify and counteract the High Church tendencies with which he had been so deeply imbued that in the early part of his undergraduate course he contemplated founding a monastery. The contemporary writers who chiefly swayed his mind were Carlyle, Ruskin and Rossetti, none of whom was likely to lead him in the steps of Newman or of Pusey. In the past his favourites were Chaucer, Malory and the Scandinavian myths, to which he was introduced by Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*. Most of these were unknown to him when he first went to Oxford. It was not till 1854 that he knew even the name of Rossetti, who for a time swept him off his feet and whirled him away in the stream of Pre-Raphaelitism. Previous to the full development of the Rossetti influence Morris had taken the momentous decision to be an artist. The art he chose was architecture; but Rossetti lured him temporarily to painting; and a strong disapproval of the processes of 'restoration' permanently alienated him from architecture as the profession of his life, though he continued to be deeply interested in it.

In the meantime he had taken somewhat unwillingly to the art of poetry. The first poem he ever wrote, *The Willow and the Red Cliff*, was read to his friends in 1855, and is praised by R. W. Dixon, who heard it, as almost equal to anything he ever afterwards did[1]. Morris's own remark, "Well, if this is poetry, it is very easy to write," is memorable. Facility was at once his gift and his danger: there are over 42,000 lines in *The Earthly Paradise*. More of his poems appeared in *The Oxford and Cambridge Maga-*

[1] Mackail's *Life of Morris*, i. 52. Mr Robert Bridges, however, in a note to *Selected Poems of R. W. Dixon*, declares that the poem still exists, and that it "abundantly refutes the notion that he appeared on that occasion as a full-fledged poet."

zine, which ran its course through 1856 and stopped at the end of the year, because the burden of expense, borne wholly by Morris, was excessive. This famous magazine, though it bore the names of both Universities, was in reality almost wholly an Oxford production. Of the five poems which Morris contributed to it, four were afterwards included in the earliest volume of his verse, *The Defence of Guenevere, and other Poems* (1858).

In this volume Morris has not completely "found himself": he is too much under the influence of Rossetti; and the burden of the Pre-Raphaelite symbolism cumbers his faculty for narrative. Perhaps the most remarkable thing in the volume is the prayer of Guenevere in *King Arthur's Tomb*. At least Guenevere is a creature of flesh and blood. The picture of the penitent going to meet Lancelot at the tomb of the husband they had wronged, with her spirit torn between the sense of sin and the desire, almost the determination, to sin again, is unforgettable:—

"'If even I go to hell, I cannot choose
But love you, Christ, yea, though I cannot keep
From loving Lancelot: O Christ, must I lose
My own heart's love? see, though I cannot weep,

Yet am I very sorry for my sin;
Moreover, Christ, I cannot bear that hell,
I am most fain to win you and to win
A place in heaven sometime—I cannot tell.—

Speak to me, Christ! I kiss, kiss, kiss your feet;
Ah! how I weep.' The maid said, 'By the tomb
He waiteth for you, lady,' coming fleet,
Not knowing what woe filled up all the room.

So Guenevere rose and went to meet him there."

A perusal of this volume shows why it was that to men of this set *Maud* was "Tennyson's last poem that mattered[1]." *Maud* was followed by the *Idylls of the King*, and these were as far as possible removed in spirit and manner from Morris's Arthurian pieces. While Tennyson's knights are gentlemen of the nineteenth century,

[1] R. W. Dixon, quoted in Mackail's *Life of Morris*, i. 44.

Morris, alike in the Arthurian poems of this volume, and in those founded upon Froissart, and in all his later work in which the scene is laid in the Middle Ages, is genuinely and profoundly mediæval. One of his most singular characteristics is that he seems always to have been more at home in distant or in purely imaginary ages than he was in his own generation. His whole life is an attempt to revive the past; not to revive by slavishly copying, but as it were to reincarnate the spirit of the past. And it is at this point that his work as "artist, manufacturer and socialist" touches his work as poet.

Morris was deeply moved by a sense of the deplorable condition of the working classes. Hence Carlyle's *Past and Present* was one of his holy books; hence, even in his time of Anglo-Catholicism, Kingsley was more read by him than Newman. To him, art was not, as it is to many, a thing severed from life: it was not even a part of life, it was the whole. "Industry without art is barbarity: life without industry is guilt." Morris saw modern industrialism divorced from art, and his whole effort was to bring back art into organic connexion with life. "Time was," he says, "when everybody that made anything made a work of art besides a useful piece of goods, *and it gave them pleasure to make it.*" The doctrine of work taught in Ruskin's chapter *Of the Nature of Gothic* sank deep into the soul of Morris; and accordingly that chapter was one of the earliest products of the Kelmscott Press. When his marriage in 1859 caused him to set about building and furnishing and decorating a house, the utter impossibility of getting for money anything but ugliness was driven home to him; and this led to the formation of the firm of Morris and Co. The operations of the firm were hampered in a manner almost incredible by the difficulty of getting either manufactured articles or raw materials suitable to their purposes. Some of the characteristics of Morris's early decorative work, which were supposed to be peculiarly 'æsthetic,' were really forced upon him by necessity, not adopted by choice. Such was the case with the subdued colours in which he at first worked. After he had become himself a dyer, he blossomed out in pure bright colours, to the astonishment of the followers whom he had meanwhile

accustomed to believe that the 'Morris' and therefore the 'correct' colours were dull neutral tints. "If you want dirt, you can find that in the street[1]," was his impatient exclamation to a customer who asked for the old neutral tints after they had been discarded.

Thus, point by point, Morris was led to revolt against the modern industrial system and to adopt in place of it something, not identical with, but akin to, the mediæval system. "In half-unconscious adaptation to the conditions of modern life, the monastery of his Oxford dreams arose into being as a workshop, and the Brotherhood became a firm registered under the Companies Acts[2]." That thirteenth century in which his imagination loved to live had, he admitted, many imperfections; but men had the great consolation that they took a pleasure in their work then. The aim of his industrial life was to reproduce this pleasure in the nineteenth century. It was this which led him on to socialism. Like Kingsley, he had no desire to see the workman rise out of his class. The man who did so simply became one more added to the middle class, a unit in the fierce struggle of the modern commercial system. The only true reform, he held, lay in the elevation of the class; and the only way to elevate the class was to retain its best members within it, and to humanise the conditions of life for all. He was quite alive to the probability that, in the revolutionary upheaval which he deemed necessary, all art might for the time be sacrificed; but he maintained that the sacrifice would be repaid. Art would shine out once more from its eclipse with a far brighter and more wholesome light, because it would rest on the sympathy of the people.

Here is the democratic note in this essentially aristocratic poet and artist. The worshipper of beauty has usually been far enough removed from sympathy with the people. He builds himself "a lordly pleasure-house," surrounds himself with costly objects of art, and dwells at ease among them for ever. It is curious that Tennyson has been criticised as unfaithful to his art in that he, a priest of the beautiful, in *The Palace of Art* condemns the soul which thus surrounds itself with objects of

[1] *Life of Morris*, i. 314.
[2] *ibid.* i. 144.

beauty. If so, Morris is equally to blame. The conclusion of Tennyson's poem is significant:—

"So when four years were wholly finished,
She threw her royal robes away.
'Make me a cottage in a vale,' she said,
'Where I may mourn and pray.

'Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
So lightly, beautifully built:
Perchance I may return with others there
When I have purged my guilt.'"

Tennyson saw dimly what Morris saw clearly. The solitary, selfish worship of beauty cannot be right unless the whole life of man is to be solitary and selfish too. Moreover, the truest and highest beauty cannot be created except through sympathy. "I am sure," says Morris, "that this lack of the general sympathy of simple people weighs very heavily on" the unlucky artist, "and makes his work feverish and dreamy, or crabbed and perverse[1]." And how can the general sympathy of simple people be got, except by making them capable of appreciating what is really beautiful—educating them, in a word, to a point incomparably higher than anything yet attained? Morris would have done so, not by prolonging the years of the school curriculum, but by making the workshop and the daily life one prolonged education and pleasure.

His practical work sets William Morris in a unique position. "Do noble deeds, not dream them all day long," is the injunction of Kingsley; but Kingsley himself mainly dreamed. So did the majority of his contemporaries: Morris did what they dreamed. Carlyle set a picture of the Past over against a picture of the Present and called upon all to bring back the spirit of the former time; but he did not show how it was to be done. Matthew Arnold drew the picture of Barbarians, Philistines and Populace, and spent a lifetime, with moderate success, in trying to convince them of the defects of "our incomparable civilisation." The Tractarians saw that what the age needed above all things was a more spiritual life; and they imagined it possible to turn themselves into primitive Christians and gain it in that way. Ruskin's

[1] *Life of Morris*, ii. 22.

gang of road-makers at Hinksey and his Guild of St George were of dubious value. Morris so far followed his mentor's steps that he set himself to *do*; but he took a more enlightened way. He learnt how to make the things he professed to make, not only as well as, but better than, anyone else could make them. The Hinksey road was one of the worst in the country; but the Morris glass, wall papers, carpets and printed books were the very best of their kind. Ruskin himself declared that in illumination Morris was superior to anyone else ancient or modern. Morris's later socialist propaganda was unwise and mischievous, though noble in intention; but his practical work showed that there was room for the mediæval system of handicrafts alongside of, though probably not in supersession of, the modern industrial system. And it is only too obvious that there is ample room for reform in that system.

This practical work, carried out upon mediæval lines, convinced Morris still more firmly of the wisdom as well as the beauty of his favourite period of history, and made him more determinedly than ever mediæval in the spirit of his literary work. But at the outset we are struck with a singular difference, an apparent contradiction between that literary work, as it shapes itself down to the date of *The Earthly Paradise*, and the practical work of which we have been speaking. A "dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time," is Morris's description of himself as poet; and there is truth in the line. No contemporary man of letters seems less practical in his writings. Carlyle, Ruskin, Tennyson, Arnold, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, all in their several ways preached to their own day and generation; but Morris seemed so far to stand aloof. *The Earthly Paradise* and *Jason* and *Guenevere* have their uses for humanity; but they are in no sense treatises on the difficulties or specifics for the diseases of the nineteenth century. In this indifference to contemporary questions Morris resembles the other Pre-Raphaelites; but then they either do not at all, or only in a very slight degree, share Morris's practical interests. Rossetti cared for only two things, poetry and pictures: all else was subordinate to these. To him the mass of men existed in order to make art possible.

It is hardly conceivable that a real contradiction could run through so large a part of the life of a great man, and we must look below the surface for an explanation of what seems to be a contradiction in the case of Morris. It is probably to be found in his conception of art, which, as has been already said, he regarded as the whole of life. Unlike Rossetti, he held that the best art was impossible unless all life was artistic. His own true life lay in the poems he wrote and the beautiful things he made. But they are serene, there is nothing polemical in them; polemics come in only in the struggle against conditions which are anti-artistic and which make life not beautiful but ugly. Morris's socialism, therefore, is a means to an end; the end itself is beauty, which he realises, so far as it is possible for him, under the conditions in which he is doomed to live, in his poetry and his artistic products. These are positive goods: the socialistic propaganda is only that sort of conditional good which consists in the removal of obstructions.

In this view of beauty Morris stands closer to Keats than to any other poet. Nearly all the other men of letters, regarding the search for beauty as only part of their business, constantly intermingle it with other things. They make a digression in the story or they pause in the poem in order to set to rights something they find amiss in the world. In the end Morris followed their example. The intrusion of a new spirit may be detected in *Sigurd the Volsung*; for Sigurd's function is the regeneration of the society in which he lives. And the new spirit is unmistakable in those later poems which were inspired by Morris's socialistic opinions; for these have the fervour and even the fierceness of Ebenezer Elliott.

It was doubtless the fact that his mind was full of so many other things, the multifarious distractions of the attempt to reintroduce beauty into objects of common life, that caused the long blank in Morris's poetical work. Nine years passed after *The Defence of Guenevere* before he published his next poem, *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867). It won fame and popularity immediately. *The Defence of Guenevere* had influenced profoundly a few sympathetic minds; but it had passed almost unnoticed by the

critics, and was still quite unknown to the great majority of readers; after the appearance of *Jason* Morris was among the best-known poets of his time.

Both in design and in execution *Jason* was unlike the earlier volume. The pieces in the latter were either dramatic or lyrical, and the manner was more like Rossetti's than it was like that of any other poet. *Jason*, on the other hand, is a narrative, and the author goes back to Chaucer for a model. He proclaims his discipleship in this very poem, and again in the beautiful *Envoi* to *The Earthly Paradise*; and the magnificent Kelmscott Press edition of Chaucer is a still more conspicuous memorial of his admiration and love of the great master of English narrative verse.

The poem on the story of Jason was originally intended to form part of *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–1870), but outgrew its place there, and so had to be issued as an independent piece. That immense collection of stories was the next production of Morris. The plan proclaims at once its relation to *The Canterbury Tales*; but though the resemblance is indubitable, it is rather one of form than of substance. In *The Earthly Paradise* we see Morris the dreamer and the romancer. There is much in it that we may reasonably compare with *The Knight's Tale*; but there is nothing to set against the wonderfully humorous stories of English life and character; nor is there anything in the remotest degree resembling that gem of all *The Canterbury Tales*, the *Prologue*. Morris was quite incapable of such robust reality; and when we compare him seriously with his master we realise the truth of his description of himself as a "dreamer of dreams born out of his due time." He might have retorted upon such criticism that it only proves the truth of his own theory. Chaucer, living in a world where art and beauty were everywhere, could do this thing; Morris, the child of an age when art and beauty are banished from common life, could not have done it even if he had had the genius of Chaucer. There is some point in the retort—but it does not explain *The Wife of Bath* or *The Miller's Tale*.

This mass of narrative poems falls into three great divisions, according to the source from which they are drawn. They are

either classical, mediæval or Scandinavian. One story in *The Earthly Paradise*, namely *The Man who never Laughed Again*, is drawn from the Arabian Nights, but it is the only exception falling outside this classification. As regards the classical and mediæval stories, the division is unimportant; for Morris treats classical themes precisely like mediæval ones; and it is evident that stories from both sources had in his imagination much the same setting. Notwithstanding the fact that he translated the *Æneid* and the *Odyssey* beautifully as well as accurately, Morris is conspicuously unclassical, if not even anti-classical, in his tone of mind. The story of Jason is hardly less mediæval in its spirit than is that of *The Man Born to be King*.

As regards the stories founded upon the Northern myths, the case is different. Contemporary critics had been dimly conscious of a change of tone between the earlier and the later parts of *The Earthly Paradise*. This change is most plainly to be seen when we compare the tales from Scandinavian sources with the others; and especially when we compare the most important of these tales, *The Lovers of Gudrun*, with anything else in the whole collection. Mr Mackail has acutely pointed out the significance of it: it is, he says, nothing less than the passing of romance into epic. The character of the northern sagas leads Morris to take this important step, probably without consciousness of its significance. There is a rugged reality about them which ill fits the vague mysticism in which the mediæval world wrapped itself. In *The Lovers of Gudrun*, where Morris was translating the Laxdaela Saga, this reality inevitably made itself felt; and it is a tribute to the superiority of the epic manner that this tale is commonly singled out as the best in *The Earthly Paradise*.

In the poems translated from Northern originals or founded upon Northern stories we have, then, a third division of the works of Morris differing essentially from both the others. In the study he made of those tales, Morris was following and developing one of the notable lines of thought of the time. Not so very long ago the name Scandinavian had been considered, as regards literature, almost synonymous with barbarian. Gray was a pioneer; and misleading as was the impression he gave of the

Northern poets, he has fairly won the honour due to him who opens up a fresh field. In the early Victorian period a literature, both popular and scholarly, began to accumulate about the subject. Various paths led towards it. The study of philology turned upon the Scandinavian tongues an attention they had not previously received. Shakespearean scholars had their minds drawn to Saxo Grammaticus. The more careful study of our own old ballads proved how close was their kinship to those of Denmark. Carlyle in his *Hero as Divinity* pointed out the unique interest which these Northern tales have for us. They are the heroic legends of our own kin, and therefore they must come closer to our heart than the stories of an alien race. Further, he maintained that in certain important respects they were intrinsically superior to the Greek myths which had hitherto received almost exclusive attention.

Probably Carlyle did more than anyone else to turn general attention to the Scandinavian legends; certainly after *Heroes and Hero-Worship* the evidences of such attention become far more frequent. Benjamin Thorpe in his *Northern Mythology* (1851) and his *Yule-tide Stories* (1853) supplied material which proved stimulating to the imagination of more than one poet. Kingsley had in himself a good deal of the old Viking spirit, and dwelt with pleasure on the history of the Northern sea-kings. Matthew Arnold rendered into beautiful verse the story of the death of Balder. It is interesting to contrast his manner with that of Morris. The latter, as we have seen, throws a mediæval atmosphere over the classical tales he tells. Arnold reverses the process: his *Balder Dead* is Scandinavian in origin, but classical in manner. It is a great tribute to the force and originality of the Scandinavian stories that they will not be mediævalised. In the hands of Morris they remain Scandinavian.

The Lovers of Gudrun was written before Morris had any personal knowledge of the land to which the Northern Sagas belonged. His intense interest in the Sagas, however, naturally kindled an interest in Iceland, and he took a journey thither in 1871, and a second one in 1873. He was infinitely more interested

and impressed than he was by Italy, which he visited in the period between those two journeys. Naturally therefore he returned from Iceland more Scandinavian in sympathy than ever; and the outcome was his great Northern epic, *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876). This is his high-water mark in verse. The story is told with admirable spirit, though not without monotony, and it bears a stamp of reality such as marks hardly any of the tales of *The Earthly Paradise*. The heroic sentiment of the Northern legends fires the poet's imagination, and he sometimes catches it grandly. *Sigurd the Volsung* therefore is tonic and inspiriting. There is no sickliness of thought in it. The heroes always dwell upon the deeds done or to be done, not upon their reward. "I know that the world is wide, and filled with deeds unwrought," they sing; and they go forth to do the deeds. It is perhaps in his war-poetry that Morris rises highest:—

"On went the Volsung banners, and on went Sigmund before,
And his sword was the flail of the tiller on the wheat of the wheat-thrashing floor,
And his shield was rent from his arm, and his helm was hewn from his head:
But who may draw nigh him to smite for the heap and the rampart of dead?
White went his hair on the wind like the ragged drift of the cloud,
And his dust-driven, blood-beaten harness was the death-storm's angry shroud,
When the summer sun is departing in the first of the night of wrack;
And his sword was the cleaving lightning, that smites and is hurried aback
Ere the hand may rise against it; and his voice was the following thunder.
Then cold grew the battle before him dead-chilled with the fear and the wonder:
For again in his ancient eyes the light of victory gleamed;
From his mouth grown tuneful and sweet the song of his kindred streamed;
And no more was he worn and weary, and no more his life seemed spent:
And with all the hope of his childhood was his wrath of battle blent;
And he thought: A little further, and the river of strife is passed,
And I shall sit triumphant the king of the world at last."

This is beautiful and spirited; but it may be worth while to compare for a moment the manner with the manner of such a

master of narrative as Scott. These lines of Morris are all about action, yet we have little action in them, and few concrete details. Their place is taken by fine imagery. Sigurd's sword is "the cleaving lightning," his harness "the death-storm's angry shroud." But when we ask what the hero clad in this harness and armed with this sword accomplished, the answer is a song. We learn indeed that he is surrounded by a heap and rampart of dead; but the dead are unnamed; and we are not told who they were who attempted to approach him behind this rampart. In short, a dim, impalpable mist veils the whole action. In Scott, on the contrary, everything is as definite as it can possibly be. We see the Howard's banner and the shield of Tunstall, stainless knight; and Marmion dies, not with a vague thought about passing the river of strife, but with a cry to charge upon his lips, and that cry addressed to the leaders of the field, Chester and Stanley. So too in the description of Bannockburn we see Douglas in the pause for breath leaning upon his war-sword and Randolph wiping his bloody brow, and we see every movement of "the grim lord of Colonsay" as he writhes upon his wound and deals back the death dealt to him. In this difference lies the secret why *Sigurd the Volsung* was coldly received. Morris possessed, and he displayed in this epic, poetical qualities of which Scott was destitute; but in this important respect Scott's was the better method of the two. The difference moreover shows the defect of Morris as a narrator. A narrative which does not move mainly upon concrete facts, whether real or imaginary, is false in principle; and Morris is too apt to pause, as he does in this passage, over the embroideries of the story. The spirit of the decorative artist was from first to last strong within him. The yellow gleam of the sun-flowers, whose profusion in Morris's 'fresco' in the Oxford Union provoked the sarcasm of Rossetti, seems to be shed over all his work.

Meanwhile, in 1873, Morris had published another long poem of a very different order, *Love is Enough; or, the Freeing of Pharamond. a Morality*, in which he attempted to revive the forgotten form of the mediæval drama. The curiously intricate structure makes this poem a kind of test of faith among the

devotees of Morris. But the attempt was fore-doomed to failure. Though *Sir Peter Harpdon's End* proves that Morris was not destitute of dramatic faculty, it is not probable that he would under any circumstances have become a great dramatist; and assuredly the world will not revert from the developed art of Shakespeare to the crude and yet complex forms of his mediæval precursors. The very attempt is a singular illustration of the exclusiveness of Morris's sympathies. In his taste for all forms of early art he may be fairly called catholic; but his sympathy stops abruptly with the Renascence. He was either indifferent to or he actively disliked the Italian Renascence, the Elizabethans, and nearly the whole of English poetry between them and the revival of romance. When we add his alienation, already noted, from classical literature, it is obvious how serious were his limitations. The omission even of "our indispensable eighteenth century" is grave enough; but the omission of so much besides becomes well-nigh ruinous.

Sigurd the Volsung was the last of Morris's long poems, unless we count among the number *The Pilgrims of Hope*, which still rests, a quasi-unity, in the columns of the socialistic organ *The Commonweal*. For ten years after *Sigurd* Morris was much absorbed in a socialist propaganda, and his writings and utterances were mostly lectures, tracts and journalistic articles on subjects bearing upon the scheme of socialism. Much of this work is of purely ephemeral interest; but the lectures on the relation between art and life are exceedingly interesting, and they contain the clearest and most specific statement anywhere to be found of the principles underlying Morris's work. It is evident that these principles had only been gradually brought out into clear consciousness by himself, and it would be a mistake to suppose that in his earlier days he deliberately set to work under their guidance; but nevertheless they were implied in his life and writings from the beginning.

Besides prose tracts, these years produced a considerable number of miscellaneous poems, many of them devoted to the socialist cause and contributed to *The Commonweal*, a journal which Morris financed, and which he edited from 1886 until he

was dismissed from his office by the extremists who won control over the party in 1889. With ultra-Christian patience Morris continued for some time to support the journal financially; and it was after his dismissal that he contributed to it his *News from Nowhere*. *A Death Song* affords a fine specimen of the work of this period. It was inspired by the death of a man from injuries received in Trafalgar Square on the famous "Bloody Sunday," 1887:—

"What cometh here from west to east a-wending?
And who are these, the marchers stern and slow?
We bear the message that the rich are sending
Aback to those who bade them wake and know.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

We asked them for a life of toilsome earning,
They bade us bide their leisure for our bread,
We craved to speak to tell our woeful learning,
We come back speechless, bearing back our dead.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

They will not learn; they have no ears to hearken;
They turn their faces from the eyes of fate;
Their gay-lit halls shut out the skies that darken.
But, lo! this dead man knocking at the gate.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

Here lies the sign that we shall break our prison;
Amidst the storm he won a prisoner's rest:
But in the cloudy dawn the sun arisen
Brings us our day of work to win the best.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
But one and all if they would dusk the day."

In these verses we seem to hear the voice of a wider-spirited and more humane Ebenezer Elliott. We may compare them with the *Songs of Democracy* (1856–1857) by Ernest Charles Jones (1819–1868) or with the *Songs of the Governing Classes* by Robert Barnabas Brough (1828–1870). But Brough is usually satirical, and there is in other respects a very remarkable difference between

Elliott on the one hand, and Jones, and still more Morris, on the other. The difference marks the rise of socialism; for Elliott is not socialistic at all. As has been pointed out in an earlier chapter, he treats capitalist and workman as one in interest and alike victims of the landlord. Ernest Jones condemns capitalist and landlord equally. He sings *The Song of the Factory Slave*:—

"The land it is the landlords';
The traders' is the sea;
The ore the usurers' coffer fills,
But what remains for me?
The engine whirls for master's craft,
The steel shines to defend,
With labour's arms, what labour raised,
For labour's foe to spend.
The camp, the pulpit, and the law,
For rich men's sons are free.
Theirs, theirs are learning, arts, and arms;
But what remains for me?
The coming hope, the future day,
When wrong to right shall bow,
And hearts that have the courage, man,
To make that future *now*."

This is the spirit of Morris too. A capitalist and an employer like Elliott, his socialistic crusade was nevertheless an attack upon the whole capitalist system. Of course his position exposed him to unpleasant personal arguments; but his defence is perfectly sound. He was but an atom in a great system, powerless to help the working classes except by labouring to change the system. He was more likely to succeed if he retained his capital than if he surrendered it; and therefore the right course, the courageous course, was to retain it. Those who most strongly dissent from Morris in opinion may admit this. There can be no doubt about his absolute disinterestedness. Whether it was wise or unwise, his socialistic career was assuredly not ignoble.

This phase is the last in the poetical life of Morris. He never changed his socialistic opinions; but in 1890 he ceased to be a member of the Socialist League, and for the remainder of his life he was more active in literature than he had been during the years

when he was a propagandist of the League. His activity, however, was mostly expended on prose romances. The first of the series was *The House of the Wolfings* (1889), the last published during his life, and perhaps the most highly finished, was *The Well at the World's End* (1896). Two, *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* (1897) and *The Story of the Sundering Flood* (1898), were posthumous. The change from verse to prose is rather a change of form than of spirit or substance. On the one hand, Morris's verse is never so far removed from prose as is the verse of such a poet as Keats or as Shelley; on the other hand, his prose is decidedly poetical. The truth seems to be that he was somewhat disappointed by the result of his labours for socialism, and, thrown back upon himself, he began to live once more in an imaginary world in the past, or, as in *News from Nowhere* (1891), in the future. Much of this prose work is beautiful, but it is essentially what he had already done in verse, and, for the purpose, verse was the better medium of the two.

With Morris may be mentioned briefly his friend and contemporary, both at school and at Oxford, Richard Watson Dixon (1833–1900), who until lately was better known as the author of a *History of the Church of England from the Abolition of the Roman Jurisdiction* (1878–1902) than as a poet, but who may gain at last, through the selection from his poems recently edited by Mr Robert Bridges, the fame which he failed to win by the various volumes of verse published during his lifetime. For Dixon, though he entered the field not long after Morris—his first volume of verse, *Christ's Company*, was published in 1861,—remained practically unknown as a poet at his death. The reason was not solely that he was inferior to, but also that he was in essentials singularly different from, his fellows of the Pre-Raphaelite school. He was too closely associated with them and too warm an admirer not to have in some measure caught their tone. It is principally noticeable in the earlier poems. *St Mary Magdalene* and *Love's Consolation*, both of which were among the contents of *Christ's Company*, are Pre-Raphaelite; and there is a faint suggestion of William Morris as late as *Polyphemus*, which was among the *Odes and Eclogues* (1884). But all similarities are superficial. If we consider general

effect, in place of the voluptuousness of the school we have in Dixon austerity, and for its amplitude condensation. This wide difference doubtless told against Dixon's fame. A poet not of the first rank has the best chance of recognition when he follows the steps of the greatest of his time. Dixon was neither quite strong enough nor quite copious enough to form a taste for himself. There are flaws in his execution too. His rhymes are often exceedingly faulty; occasionally his lines are padded; here and there his diction is objectionable. The *Ode on Conflicting Claims*, which has been singled out as one of his best pieces, recalls the worst of eighteenth century verse in the phrase, "the liquid Hyblian store." But notwithstanding all this, pieces such as *By the Sea* and *Death* and *On Advancing Age* and the sonnet *Humanity* are indubitably the work of one who was a true if not a very great poet; and the sonnet which begins, "Give me the darkest corner of a cloud," may challenge comparison with all but the very greatest in the English language:—

"Give me the darkest corner of a cloud,
Placed high upon some lonely mountain's head,
Craggy and harsh with ruin; let me shroud
My life in horror, for I wish me dead.
No gentle lowland known and loved of old,
Lure me to life back through the gate of tears;
But long time drenched with rain and numb with cold,
May I forget the solace of the years:
No trees by streams, no light and warmth by day,
No white clouds pausing o'er the happy town;
But wind and rain, and fogbanks slow and gray,
And stony wastes, and uplands scalped and brown;
No life, but only death in life: a grave
As cold and bleak as thine, dear soul, I crave."

The group of Oxonian Pre-Raphaelites was still unbroken, and even their early triumphs were still to win, when Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909) came to Oxford from Eton. His introduction to William Morris and Burne-Jones took place in 1857, and soon he too was an avowed disciple of Rossetti. This was inevitable. Few who came in contact with him were able to resist Rossetti; his followers were the men of greatest genius then in the

University. To such a man Swinburne was irresistibly drawn. No one was ever more quick than he to see merit, no one was ever more generously lavish of praise. But for that very reason he is not at any period of his career a man to be identified with Pre-Raphaelitism, as Morris was at the start. He loved many forms of beauty too ardently to absorb himself in one. Friendly as he was with Burne-Jones and Morris, his chief friend at the University was John Nichol (1833–1894), himself a poet who, in his drama of *Hannibal* (1873) and in a few of his lyrics, has left things fine enough to stir regret that he did not do better still. Swinburne, a junior member of Nichol's college, Balliol, contributed to the *Undergraduate Papers*, edited by Nichol for a short time after the decease of the more memorable *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*.

Lady Burne-Jones gives a striking and attractive description of Swinburne in his youth. "His appearance was very unusual and in some ways beautiful, for his hair was glorious in abundance and colour and his eyes indescribably fine. When repeating poetry he had a perfectly natural way of lifting them in a rapt, unconscious gaze, and their clear green colour softened by thick brown eyelashes was unforgettable: 'Looks commercing with the skies' expresses it without exaggeration. He was restless beyond words, scarcely standing still at all and almost dancing as he walked, while even in sitting he moved continually, seeming to keep time, by a swift movement of the hands at the wrists, and sometimes of the feet also, with some inner rhythm of excitement. He was courteous and affectionate and unsuspicious, and faithful beyond most people to those he really loved. The biting wit which filled his talk so as at times to leave his hearers dumb with amazement always spared one thing, and that was an absent friend[1]." The picture is a good introduction to the poet, so generous in heart, so prone to excess both in praise and in blame, so rapid and so infinitely various in the movements of his verse.

Swinburne was a rebel by nature, and doubtless the rebellious strain in his blood was one of the forces which drew him towards the older rebel, Walter Savage Landor, whom he visited at Florence,

[1] *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, i. 215.

and whom he praised with the utmost warmth both while Landor was alive and after his death. To his memory *Atalanta in Calydon* is dedicated, and in the dedicatory epistle to the collected edition of Swinburne's poems he is named with Mazzini and Hugo as one of the three gods of the poet's worship. This rebelliousness was the guarantee that Swinburne would do nothing exactly as other men had done it, and it helps to explain the revolution which he soon began to work in Pre-Raphaelite poetry. He was a man with a threefold mission. In the first place, it was his function to wed classicism to romance. Secondly, he was destined to re-establish the vogue of French literature, which in the earlier part of the nineteenth century had wielded less influence over English men of letters than at any other period since the Restoration. In the third place, it was Swinburne's task to demonstrate the capacity of the English language for lyric measures, and to enlarge its resources to such a degree that there is scarcely a hint from our older poets undeveloped by him, while he furnishes examples of many forms besides which are either original, or which he has imported from foreign languages.

Swinburne's genius was precocious. While he was still a boy he had read widely, not only in English, but in French and in the classical languages as well. This early reading was the foundation of a scholarship which made him in his maturity one of the most profoundly learned of all our poets. His admirable memory retained nearly everything it received When Rossetti's friends attempted to piece together the poems buried in the coffin of his wife, it was on Swinburne chiefly that they relied. Besides this, of all English poets he was the most fluent. He might therefore have been tempted to premature publication, but if he ever felt the inclination he repressed it. Most of the verse of his boyhood and of the first years of manhood was destroyed, and his first volume, *The Queen Mother and Rosamond* (1860), did not appear until he had reached the relatively mature age of twenty-four. He says however that the dramas it contained were written while he was yet under academic or tutorial authority. The volume passed with little notice; nor can it be said that the contents were of very remarkable merit. Very different was the fate, as well as the value,

of *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865). This drama, the greatest in the classical form since *Samson Agonistes*, at once established Swinburne as one of the chief poets of the age. In the judgment of many it remains even now his greatest work; at the very least it is a full-blown flower of his genius. It illustrates two of the three points which have been already noted with regard to him. Classic in form, *Atalanta* is nevertheless a poem which could only have been written in an age of romance and by a writer deeply under the influence of the romantic spirit; and the choruses proclaim the advent of a lyrical poet of the first rank. They also show him to be of the school of Shelley rather than of Keats, a point wherein he differs from his friends of the Pre-Raphaelite group. No other poem by Swinburne ever achieved such success as *Atalanta*. The later Greek tragedy, *Erechtheus* (1876), was, if not inferior, at any rate less surprising after the triumph of its predecessor.

In the interval between the two Greek tragedies Swinburne published *Poems and Ballads* (1866). The volume was composed of pieces for the most part earlier in date of composition than *Atalanta*, and it shows the poet far more completely under the influence of Rossetti than he is in *Atalanta*. The defiant spirit of Swinburne led him to emphasise those aspects of the Rossetti school which were most certain to shock English opinion. One of the principal poems in the collection, *Laus Veneris*, a powerful expression of physical passion, was treated as if it were the type of the whole and even gave its title to an American edition of the collection. The outcry was so great that Moxon broke his connexion as publisher to Swinburne. What is more to be regretted is that this unfortunate flouting of a popular sentiment which is not indefensible, led for a time to a general neglect of many things of beauty, such as the lines, full of restrained emotion, *In Memory of Walter Savage Landor*, and the exquisite *Garden of Proserpine* with these haunting stanzas:—

"Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands;

Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands";

and

"From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea."

But perhaps most characteristic of Swinburne was the *Hymn to Proserpine*, with its glorious ringing metre. Nowhere does the paganism of the poet come out more grandly than in this hymn, supposed to be sung after the proclamation in Rome of the Christian faith. It would be hard to find a better specimen of his work than the closing lines :—

"In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the night where thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the night,
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of gods from afar
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul of a star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod by the sun,
Let thy soul with their souls find place, and forget what is done and undone.
Thou art more than the Gods who number the days of our temporal breath;
For these give labour and slumber; but thou, Proserpina, death.
Therefore now at thy feet I bide for a season in silence. I know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they sleep; even so.
For the glass of the years is brittle wherein we gaze for a span;
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.
So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep.
For there is no God found stronger than death; and death is a sleep."

Evidently the writer of these lines was no mere disciple of any man's. Powerful as was Rossetti's personality, he could not, if he had wished, have held in thrall a spirit so independent as Swin-

burne's essentially was, notwithstanding his fervour of admiration. Even at the date of *Poems and Ballads* the Pre-Raphaelite influence is conspicuous rather than profound. Swinburne was not wholly absorbed in it. The deep sensuousness which characterised a number of these early pieces was a note of the school, rather than of the man Swinburne. Romance is a common element. But in Rossetti the essence of romance is mediævalism, while Swinburne turns to France and finds *his* form of romance in his master Hugo. He turns to Greece, and what he does not find he imports; so that *Atalanta in Calydon* and even *Erechtheus*, as well as the minor Greek themes he has handled, are Greek, but Greek with a difference. In *Poems and Ballads* he pays, it is true, perfunctory obeisance to the Middle Ages in the choice of a few subjects; but his heart is not in them. In *Tristram of Lyonesse* the mediævalism is still a thing distinct from that of Rossetti or of Morris; and the dramas founded on themes of the Middle Ages are more Shakespearean than mediæval. Swinburne was wholly untouched by catholic sentiment. He was in sympathy with the mediævalism of the sinner Villon, rather than with that which celebrates saints and martyrs and Madonnas. He could admire, but it would never have been his impulse to write, *The Blessed Damozel*. His style is fundamentally different from that which is appropriate to such subjects. Energy and rapidity and fire are the natural characteristics both of his metre and of his diction. Dim lights and perfume-laden air are things of an alien world. He rejoices in the sea, and in storms—storms on land and ocean, storms among the nations, storms in the human soul.

Swinburne's works in verse fall obviously into two great classes, —the dramas, and the poems, chiefly lyrical. The choice of the dramatic form for his earliest volume seems to show that his personal ambition was to excel in that; and this impression is confirmed by the language and tone of the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the collected poems. There he avows that his first if not his strongest ambition had been "to do something worth doing, and not utterly unworthy of a young countryman of Marlowe the teacher and Webster the pupil of Shakespeare, in the line of work which those three poets had left as a possibly unattainable example for

ambitious Englishmen"; and he seems to have taken comfort from that division among critics which caused some to prefer the dramas to the lyrics. If this was his ambition he must have been disappointed. *Rosamond* and *The Queen Mother* have never been ranked among Swinburne's great works; and the success of *Atalanta in Calydon* was due more to the choruses than to the dramatic part proper. Swinburne however was persistent. Before *Poems and Ballads* he had published *Chastelard* (1865), the first part of the trilogy on Mary Queen of Scots. It was followed by *Bothwell* (1874) and by *Mary Stuart* (1881). But readers of poetry remained obdurate in their view, not only in face of the Queen Mary trilogy, but after *Marino Faliero* (1885) and *Locrine* (1887) and *Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards* (1899). The great majority were, and are, of opinion that it is Swinburne the lyrist, not Swinburne the dramatist, who is the great poet. His genius was not dramatic. He was misled by his ardent love for the works of the Elizabethan playwrights. He apparently believed that theirs was the highest form of creative work, and even to the end he could not convince himself that, prodigal of gifts as nature had been to him, she had denied him some that were essential to the dramatist. He failed in two respects. He was not a master of character, and he had not that self-restraint which the dramatist must show if he would win success. The stricter laws of Greek tragedy saved him in *Atalanta in Calydon*, the looser structure of the Elizabethan drama exposed him to irresistible temptation when he attempted to follow Marlowe and Shakespeare and Webster. Hence the enormous mass of *Bothwell*, hence the inextricable confusion of *Mary Stuart*. No man with the dramatic instinct ever wrote dramas containing speeches hundreds of lines long.

Such a diversion of energy would have been serious in the case of a poet less fluent than Swinburne. In his case it was not so. Verses flowed from his pen without effort, and in the mass of lyrical matter he has left we have probably sufficient for the full illustration of his powers. The outcry occasioned by *Poems and Ballads* did not move Swinburne; but interests which had been obscured by the objectionable pieces revealed themselves in his

later work. *A Song of Italy* (1867), afterwards included in *Songs of Two Nations* (1875), struck a note which was erroneously supposed to be new. It was not so. Among Swinburne's contributions to *Undergraduate Papers* was one which he himself described as "a terrific onslaught on the French Empire and its Clerical supporters[1]." Among *Poems and Ballads*, *A Song in Time of Order* and *A Song in Time of Revolution* showed Swinburne to be heir to Shelley as the poet of liberty. In *Songs before Sunrise* (1871), as well as in *Songs of Two Nations*, the proofs were multiplied. Devotion to liberty and its consequent, hatred of tyranny and oppression, whether of kings or of priests, were among the deepest and most enduring feelings of his nature. He was profoundly stirred by the great national movements of his time. The struggle to secure the freedom of Italy in particular fascinated him, for it gathered to one point nearly everything that was fitted to appeal to him. The beauty of Italy, her unique place in history, her splendid contributions to literature and art, all attracted Swinburne as they had attracted Milton and Byron and Browning. His ardent admiration for Mazzini, to whom is dedicated *A Song of Italy*, added in the case of Swinburne a personal tie. He never sang with more fervour than in the verses inspired by enthusiasm for Italy, or by hatred of the oppressor Austria. The notes are varied—notes of doubt and disappointment as well as of triumph,—for the course of the struggle is chequered. It is complex as well, a struggle for spiritual no less than for political freedom. Swinburne's hatred of priestcraft was, if possible, more fiery than his hatred of kingcraft, and he never lost an opportunity to give it utterance, sometimes with a violence which partly defeated itself, occasionally with a telling restraint.

As the champion both of political freedom and of spiritual freedom Swinburne is an optimist. *Tiresias* suggests that the powers which seem to be throned on high are tottering.

> "The hand that slays, the lip that mocks and lies,
> Temples and thrones that yet men seem to see—
> Are these dead or art thou dead, Italy?"

[1] *Literary Anecdotes of the XIX Century*, ii. 294.

Messidor declares that "the dumb dread people" shall "put in the sickles and reap." The *Hymn of Man* closes with a note of jubilation :—

"Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things."

And there is a ring of triumph in the concluding stanza of *A Marching Song*:—

"Rise, ere the dawn be risen;
Come, and be all souls fed;
From field and street and prison
Come, for the feast is spread;
Live, for the truth is living; wake, for night is dead."

Though it was Italy that roused Swinburne's keenest interest, he was ready to take fire wherever freedom was in question. This was the cause of his virulence against Russia as well as against Austria. In the sonnet (it is one of the finest in the language, and remarkable for dignity of utterance) *To Louis Kossuth* (1877), the Hungarian patriot is praised above all things because his hand is raised to smite "men's heads abased before the Muscovite." The poet saw in the great northern Empire the bulwark of tyranny, and hence *Russia: an Ode* is full of invective which fails in its purpose just because it is unmeasured. The same sentiment inspires the terrible sonnets on *The Launch of the Livadia*, where perhaps Swinburne reaches the extreme limit of vituperation which remains effective. And effective it assuredly is. Few things of the kind are so impressive as the closing lines of the third sonnet:—

"O heart fast bound of frozen poison, be
All nature's as all true men's hearts to thee,
A two-edged sword of judgment; hope be far
And fear at hand for pilot oversea
With death for compass and despair for star,
And the white foam a shroud for the White Czar."

Like Tennyson, Swinburne was emphatically a patriotic poet. His love of England was another phase of his love of freedom. He saw in his own country the antithesis to Russia, and, republican as he was, a Russian insult to the Empress of India drew from him

the scathing sonnets, *The White Czar*. His comparative estimate of the two countries is indicated in the scornful exclamation,

> "Thou set thy foot where England's used to stand!
> Thou reach thy rod forth over Indian land!"

Not that at any time Swinburne had only smooth things to say to his countrymen. To his eagerness they seemed far too remiss and half-hearted in their support of Italy. In *Perinde ac Cadaver* Liberty in a vision speaks to England asleep and rebukes her for her sloth. *The Halt before Rome* hints at the reason.

> "What matter if these lands tarry,
> That tarried (we said) not of old?
> France, made drunken by fate,
> England, that bore up the weight
> Once of men's freedom, a freight
> Holy, but heavy to carry
> For hands overflowing with gold."

As time went on Swinburne became less disposed for adverse criticism even of the England of his own day. *The Commonweal*, a fine though somewhat diffuse poem in celebration of the first jubilee of Queen Victoria, might well have been weighed in the balance, when the office of laureate became vacant, against his earlier advocacy of tyrannicide. The splendid poem, *The Armada*, which follows *The Commoweal* in the third series of *Poems and Ballads*, celebrates an event three centuries old; but it links the three centuries together, and the fervid close is the voice of the poet's love for the England of 1888. Much of his later work, in so far as it deals with events of the time, is inspired by the wish to "keep our noble England whole." The poet of the sea has *A Word for the Navy*, and he celebrates *The Centenary of the Battle of the Nile* and *Trafalgar Day*. Another piece, *The Commonweal*, earlier than that above referred to, is "a song for Unionists"; and this, with *The Question* and *Apostasy*, leaves no doubt as to Swinburne's sentiment with regard to the great political problem of Gladstone's later days. Still later, certain sonnets and poems inspired by the Transvaal War show the old republican in the character of champion of a monarchy which he judged to be more truly a commonwealth than the nominal republic of Kruger, and of the strong

whom he judged to be using their strength in the cause of liberty threatened by the weak. Thus the whirligig of time brought in its revenges, and the voice of the revolutionary poet was raised on behalf of the policy of the Conservative party.

An ideal however must be either in the past or in the future; it implies an element of enchantment in the view which only distance can give. And Swinburne's ideal England was the England of the Commonwealth. The form of government gratified his republicanism; the masterful strength of Cromwell accorded with the imperialistic strain in him; the Protector's championship of Piedmont appealed to the lover of freedom, and his re-establishment of England's sea-power to the lover of the sea. All this finds expression in the powerful stanzas entitled *Cromwell's Statue*, which were evoked by the rejection by the House of Commons in 1895 of the proposal to set up a statue of Cromwell at Westminster.

The consideration of the notes of liberty and patriotism in Swinburne has led on towards the close of his career. Among the poetical publications not yet dealt with the principal were the second and third series of *Poems and Ballads*, issued respectively in 1878 and 1889, *Songs of the Springtides* (1880), *Studies in Song* (1880), *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), *A Century of Roundels* (1883) and *The Tale of Balen* (1896). The two Arthurian pieces stand apart, in some respects, from the rest of Swinburne's works. They were attempts to retell the mediæval tales with more fidelity to the originals than had been shown in other contemporary versions; and *The Tale of Balen* is certainly superior to the weakest of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. But the narrative form was not well suited to Swinburne's genius, and though he disowned any wish to make *Tristram of Lyonesse* a story, and the lyrical metre makes his *Balen* something different from an ordinary tale in verse, there is necessarily more of the narrative in these two pieces than in anything else he wrote, except the northern ballads.

A Century of Roundels well illustrates Swinburne's astonishing command of metre. The fetters of the form would have cramped almost any other writer and would probably have led to triviality. He not only moves easily in them, but gains rather than loses by

the restriction; for in his case freedom sometimes tempts to license. The roundels are no mere exercises of ingenuity, but, many of them, expressions of genuine thought and emotion. It is however the two later series of *Poems and Ballads* which are the most remarkable among the volumes above named; and probably they, with the first series and *Atalanta in Calydon*, will in the long run mainly determine their author's rank as a poet. It is sometimes said that Swinburne showed no development and made no advance —that what he was in the first *Poems and Ballads* he remained to the end. Possibly in one sense this is true, or nearly so. There is not much in his later works that is clearly better than the best of that early volume. But if there is not advance to heights absolutely higher there is certainly change, and evidence of mastery over a wider range of poetry. There are notable differences in the tables of contents of the three series of *Poems and Ballads*, differences not so much due to the introduction of elements wholly unexampled in the first series, as in relative proportions. The sensuous element remains, and some of the translations from Villon prove that the temptation to shock prudery was still felt. But the place of chief prominence, which was held in the first volume by poems like *Laus Veneris* and *Dolores* and *Faustine* and *Fragoletta*, is now taken by those memorial verses and verses addressed to living artists, in which Swinburne loved to pour out his generous praise, and which, whether they deal with men like John William Inchbold (the subject of one of his finest poems) and Sir Henry Taylor and Victor Hugo and the *Two Leaders*, or with men like Baudelaire and Gautier, are marked by grave strength and deep feeling. Nowhere does he rise higher than in *Ave atque Vale*, the stanzas in memory of Baudelaire, the charm of which is the singularly harmonious blending of the sensuous and the intellectual.

The growth of the political interest has already been indicated. The interest in nature grows too. The *Four Songs of Four Seasons* bear witness to it; and *Winter in Northumberland* is an evidence of that local patriotism which was hardly less characteristic of Swinburne than national patriotism, and which found grand expression in the poem *Northumberland*, included among the

group which take their title from *A Channel Passage*. These pieces show that the object of Swinburne's supreme love among things natural was the sea, and also whence he drank in that love. In the former, like Kingsley, he celebrates the "stout north-easter"; and it is safe to infer that the storms of the North Sea, beating in on the stern Northumbrian coast, had been the means of stirring the poet's soul as fertile fields and southern suns could never stir it. *Ex-Voto* is a fine prayer that he may find his grave in the sea:—

> "But when my time shall be,
> O mother, O my sea,
> Alive or dead, take me,
> Me too, my mother."

Connected also with this local patriotism is a group of poems singularly unlike the great mass of Swinburne's verse—the ballads founded upon the old minstrelsy of the Border. A few pieces of this kind, such as *The Bloody Son* (though this is described as Finnish) and *The Sea-Swallows*, were included in the first series of *Poems and Ballads*. But whatever may be the case with other phases of his work, Swinburne's culmination in this phase certainly came in the third series. Finer pieces of their kind than *A Jacobite's Farewell* and *A Jacobite's Exile* do not exist; perhaps it is hardly too much to say that nothing so fine is anywhere to be found. The pathos of both is perfect, and it is difficult to choose between them, but the former may be quoted for its shortness and for the consummate touch in the third stanza:—

> "There's nae mair lands to tyne, my dear,
> And nae mair lives to gie:
> Though a man think sair to live nae mair,
> There's but one day to die.
>
> For a' things come and a' things gane
> What needs ye rend your hair?
> But kiss me till the morn's morrow,
> Then I'll kiss ye nae mair.
>
> O lands are lost and life's losing,
> And what were they to gie?
> Fu' mony a man gives all he can,
> But nae man else gives ye.

Our king wons over the sea's water,
And I in prison sair;
But I'll win out the morn's morrow,
And ye'll see me nae mair."

It may be that the author of the *Hymn to Proserpine* never did anything finer than that in the strain most peculiarly his own; and the author of the lines *In Memory of Walter Savage Landor* had already set a standard not easily surpassed in the elegiac strain. But at least in respect of both he broadened immensely the basis of his fame; while in respect of the poems dedicated to liberty there are in the later volumes heights not reached and depths not sounded in *A Song in Time of Order* or *A Song in Time of Revolution*, and the two Jacobite laments soar quite beyond comparison with anything of a similar nature in the early volume. Though Swinburne reached his maturity soon, it is not correct to say that he had no development.

Swinburne was among the most voluminous of writers. Besides the mass of poetry included in the volumes noticed above, and the bulky collection of dramas, he wrote a quantity of prose sufficient to have absorbed in its production the energies of most men. His first prose work of importance was his *William Blake* (1868), an instance of his generous eagerness to praise, whether in prose or in verse, and especially to praise genius neglected or underrated. Nothing delighted him more than to rescue from neglect men like Charles Jeremiah Wells and Edward FitzGerald, to both of whom —in both cases guided apparently in the first instance by Rossetti— he did invaluable service. But the Elizabethan dramatists were his favourite field for criticism. He had read them eagerly from boyhood; he wrote on Marlowe and Webster in *Undergraduate Papers*; and at various dates in his later career he made studies of most of the leaders among them. Swinburne's criticism is usually right at heart, but it suffers from one very grave defect: it is all in superlatives, usually of panegyric, occasionally of censure. Again and again the strongest words in the language are lavished upon work, deserving indeed of praise, but not absolutely the greatest. When all the resources of speech seem to the ordinary man to have been spent upon Webster and Tourneur, he is apt to

ask himself what remains for Shakespeare; and though Swinburne will proceed to show that, for him, something does remain, the effect is not satisfactory. Immoderate panegyric produces in the reader a sense of distrust; and when constantly repeated it wearies by its monotony.

Perhaps no recent poet has equalled, and certainly none has surpassed, Swinburne in force of initiation. He is remarkable not only for what he has done himself, but for what he has inspired others to do. In the various ways already indicated he has been a leader, and recent poetry bears his mark more clearly than the mark of anyone else since Tennyson. This, and not the fact that he died but yesterday, is the reason why he seems still so near. Though William Morris was only three years older, his work seems to belong to a past considerably more distant than Swinburne's. This fact increases the difficulty of judging the latter. The natural and graceful tendency to silence censure and to dwell only on that which is praiseworthy has been conspicuous in the notices evoked by his death, and has been strengthened by the sense that in some respects expiation was due. He has been compared with the greatest, at least the greatest of recent times, and treated as their equal. But probably posterity will refuse to ratify such a judgment as this. In the technique of verse Swinburne is supreme: he is at least the equal, and possibly the superior, of any English poet since Milton. In variety he unquestionably surpasses all. But when we search behind technique for the intellectual part, and not merely for the intellectual but for the most profoundly emotional part, the result is not so satisfactory. Frequently the meaning seems to be blurred by the pomp of words. Magniloquent is a more appropriate word, as applied to Swinburne's style, than magnificent. It is gorgeous, but it is not what Matthew Arnold meant when he spoke of the grand style. That implies restraint. The master of the grand style is master of himself: Swinburne is carried away by his own facility. Frequently his poems are too long, and while every stanza may be fine, the total impression may be less than that which would have been produced by a piece half the length. Sometimes, especially among the memorial pieces, and above all

in the great Jacobite laments, we find evidence that Swinburne was capable of conquering his defect; but the very shock of surprise with which such pieces are read for the first time is proof of its prevalence. He is a poet who, though he is fundamentally intellectual, all too frequently yields to the charm of melodious words.

For the purpose of "placing" a poet there is nothing more useful than Matthew Arnold's well-known test of comparison with lines of supreme beauty. Applied to Swinburne this test yields remarkable results. Notwithstanding the classical element in him, no one can doubt that he is a poet of the romantic school. It is therefore proper to compare him with other romantic poets, and, by preference, with the masters of romance in the nineteenth century. As specimens of their work, Arnold might have chosen such lines as Coleridge's

> "For he on honey-dew hath fed,
> And drunk the milk of Paradise,"

and Keats's

> "Magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

For verse such as this the ordinary terms of panegyric are inadequate. It partakes of the magic of the faery casements and of the land where the food is honey-dew. Only very great poets have the secret of it, and even they only in moments of the highest inspiration. If we ask where in Swinburne is to be found verse with this, it is not easy to give an answer. There are heights of poetry in *The Ancient Mariner* and the *Ode to a Nightingale* which are beyond his reach. Beside them, even such pieces as *Hesperia* and the great chorus, "When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces," seem like superb mechanism. In the exquisite close of *Tristram of Lyonesse* Swinburne reaches the heights:—

> "And over them, while death and life shall be,
> The light and sound and darkness of the sea."

But on the whole it must be said that he is not master of the magic which the greatest of the romanticists wield. With the

mysticism which he rejected, or rather which he did not possess, there vanished an ineffable something which is of the essence of poetry. Judged by this test, and in comparison with such masters, the conclusion seems to be that his place will be high, yet somewhat below the highest.

Through Swinburne the influence of Rossetti passed to another poet, who may perhaps be classed, though not without some reserve, among the later Pre-Raphaelites. This was that little appreciated man of genius, John Byrne Leicester Warren, Lord de Tabley (1835–1895). Warren was one of those men who show a peculiar sensitiveness to the influences of their time, and Pre-Raphaelitism was neither the only nor the earliest force which told upon him. He was senior to Swinburne at Oxford, and it was not till some time after their college career was ended that the two poets were made known to one another by Lord Houghton. Tennyson and Browning left their mark upon him as well as the Pre-Raphaelites. He himself declared that Tennyson appealed to him more, both in youth and in middle age, than any other poet; and his verse bears out the statement. On the other hand, many of his finest pieces are evidently inspired by Rossetti and Swinburne; and in his later years of authorship they were his models, if he can be said to have worked on models at all. It is impossible to ignore the influence of *Atalanta in Calydon* upon *Philoctetes* and *Orestes*, or the Pre-Raphaelite note in such gorgeously beautiful poems as the *Hymn to Astarte* and "Sire of the rising Day."

Warren began to write long before he succeeded to the title by which he is now best known. Between 1859 and 1862 he published four volumes of poetry under the *nom de plume* of Preston. They passed quite unnoticed; and in fact they contain very little which it would be desirable to disinter; for the writer's genius did not bloom early. Between 1863 and 1865 three more volumes followed under the name of William Lancaster. They showed a remarkable advance on the preceding volumes, and contain a few pieces which are worthy to rank with their author's best work. *The Strange Parable* is hardly to be matched for intensity except in Browning; and in conception it is absolutely

original, owing nothing to Browning or anyone else. Many of the pieces show the influence of Tennyson's *English Idylls*. Still, fame was slow to come. In 1866 he tried a more ambitious venture, the classical drama of *Philoctetes*. This was succeeded in the following year by another classical drama, *Orestes*. In their kind, these two dramas are only surpassed, in recent times, by Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*; but, great as is their merit, they are not the sort of work which was likely to win popularity. The two next volumes, *Rehearsals* (1870) and *Searching the Net* (1873), were published under Warren's own name. In them we have the poet at his best, in the full maturity of his powers. Yet the real genius displayed in these volumes remained unrecognised till many of the same pieces were republished in the *Poems Dramatic and Lyrical* of 1893. Then at last the lovers of poetry seemed to awake, and it might have been thought that the fame of De Tabley was secure. Soon however they went contentedly to sleep again, and the second series of *Poems Dramatic and Lyrical* (1895) was received with comparative indifference. In a few months the poet was safe from the sting of critical censure or of neglect; but the aftermath of his poetry was gathered and published in a volume entitled *Orpheus in Thrace* (1901), where pieces such as *Napoleon the Great* and *A Song of Despair* prove that his faculty for writing powerful and beautiful verse remained unimpaired to the last. Yet for nearly twenty years this highly gifted writer had been frozen into silence by public neglect. It is true he had private troubles to struggle with; but the probability is that if he had been warmed and encouraged by something like adequate appreciation of his real greatness, De Tabley could and would have written much more verse like *A Woodland Grave*, *An Ocean Grave*, *Jael*, *Orpheus in Hades*, *Napoleon*, and the many other pieces in lyrical measures or in dramatic monologue which we owe to him.

Lord de Tabley was a highly accomplished man, a botanist, conchologist, numismatist and bibliophil, and was minutely and accurately acquainted with every subject to which his interest extended. The knowledge of a specialist in so many departments might have proved a snare; but De Tabley's verse is never

pedantic, never loaded with the technicalities of his many pursuits. It shows the careful and habitual student of nature, but not to the detriment of the poetry. Almost if not altogether uninfluenced by Wordsworth, De Tabley is yet one of the most careful and skilful and accurate among English poets of nature. His own wide knowledge enabled him to detect the errors of others; and his fastidious taste objected to everything that was inconsistent with fact. He embodies probably a greater amount of nature-lore in his verse than any other English poet. "The poets' birds" and "the poets' beasts" have been shown to be a somewhat conventional collection. Much as in heraldry we have an everlasting repetition of the eagle and the lion; much as in heraldry we have these creatures represented in certain conventional postures; so in poetry, birds and beasts and flowers are a species of stage property. The lark, the nightingale or the thrush sings, the cuckoo ushers in the spring, the rose blooms or blushes. But De Tabley has no conventions. There is a great variety of birds and flowers named in his poetry; and the name is usually accompanied by some descriptive epithet or phrase indicative of the accurate observer. Yet the epithet or phrase is always pictorial: there is no invasion of the realm of poetry by science.

Lord de Tabley has two predominant notes, whose character is accurately indicated by the title of the two collections which first secured for his name general recognition. He is either lyrical or dramatic. The lyrical gift was of later development in him than the dramatic; and he was successful in blank verse long before he had attained mastery in rhyming lyrical measures. It is probably for this reason that some of his contemporaries, who made acquaintance with his work as it was produced, expressed doubt or disapproval of his lyrics, and advised him to cultivate blank verse. Many would probably select *Jael* as the culmination of his art, the greatest triumph he has achieved. It is a wonderful piece, both in conception and in execution; quite worthy of Browning at his best. *The Strange Parable*, *The Knight in the Wood*, a marvellous piece of impressionism, and *Orpheus in Hades* are other examples illustrative of De Tabley's mastery of blank verse. It is remarkably varied. Sometimes

we have the smoothness of the Tennysonian idyll, accompanied with a simplicity which Tennyson only occasionally shows. Sometimes we have a Browningesque abruptness. In the best pieces, like *Jael*, there are suggestions now of one, now of the other of the senior poets; but the dignity and force of the piece are De Tabley's own. Occasionally we find specimens of a gorgeousness of style which was probably suggested by, but is certainly not copied from, the Pre-Raphaelites. Take for example the opening of *Orpheus in Hades*:—

> "Ruler and regent, to whose dread domain
> The mighty flood of life and human woe
> Sends down the immeasurable drift of souls,
> As silted sands are rolled to Neptune's deep,
> I, even I, approach your awful realms,
> Queen of oblivion, lady of Acheron,
> To crave one captive."

The advice given to De Tabley that he should cultivate blank verse was therefore fully justified by his success in that difficult measure. Not many poets have used it so well; fewer still have handled it so variously. Yet it would have been a thing to be regretted had he followed the advice in the spirit in which it was intended; for it was meant to discourage him from the lyric. But on a review of his whole work, taking the later verse along with the earlier, it is not easy to say in which he succeeded best. Possibly *Jael* may be the most precious jewel in his collection; but the *Hymn to Astarte*, *A Woodland Grave*, *An Ocean Grave* and *Napoleon* could ill be spared. In the first named we have that same magnificence of style which distinguishes the blank-verse lines quoted above:—

> "Regent of love and pain,
> Before whose ageless eyes
> The nations pass like rain,
> And thou abidest, wise,
> As dewdrops in a cup
> To drink thy children up."

But in the lyric too De Tabley has more styles than one. Notice, for instance, the lovely interludes, which vary and relieve the

tumult of Waterloo, the tragic pain of St Helena and the majestic grief of the Invalides in the great Napoleon ode. Or take the beautiful pathos of the closing stanzas of *An Ocean Grave*:—

"O sea-wall, mounded long and low,
Let iron bounds be thine;
Nor let the salt wave overflow
That breast I held divine.

Nor float its sea-weed to her hair,
Nor dim her eyes with sands;
No fluted cockle burrow where
Sleep folds her patient hands.

Tho' thy crest feel the wild sea's breath,
Tho' tide-weight tear thy root,
Oh, guard the treasure-house, where death
Has bound my darling mute.

* * * *

And, ah, dear heart, in thy still nest,
Resign this earth of woes,
Forget the ardours of the west,
Neglect the morning glows.

Sleep, and forget all things but one,
Heard in each wave of sea,—
How lonely all the years will run
Until I rest by thee."

In poetry, though the Pre-Raphaelite spirit has its root in *The Germ*, the two publications by which principally the influence was spread and its exact character determined, are of much later date. They are Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* (1866) and Rossetti's *Poems* (1870); so that the true order of succession is reversed in the order of publication, and in respect of the "general reader" the influence of the younger man precedes that of the elder. William Morris also helped to spread it. To the influence of one or more of these three may be traced the poetry of a considerable number of writers who are still living. Among those who are living no longer, Arthur O'Shaughnessy (1844–1881) is conspicuous for the blending of all three in one. His *Epic on Women* (1870), *Lays of France* (1872), *Music and Moon-*

light (1874), and the posthumous *Songs of a Worker* (1881), are all the work of a man of sensitive nature and of poetic temperament rather than of great poetic power. Their charm is the fluency and sweetness of the verse, their defect is the absence of a proportionate weight of thought. O'Shaughnessy is essentially a follower, if not an imitator, and he exaggerates the faults of his models while he fails to capture their higher beauties. With him may be named his brother-in-law, Philip Bourke Marston (1850–1887), the son of Dr J. Westland Marston, who was the author of *Strathmore* and other dramas, middling in quality, which once enjoyed some reputation. Philip Marston's blindness and his early death gave to his work a pathetic interest which disarmed criticism. His *Song-Tide and other Poems* (1871), *All in All* (1875) and *Wind Voices* (1883) are graceful and melodious, but somewhat thin.

There is more merit in the work of Roden Noel (1834–1894) who, considerably senior in years, lived less under the shadow of the dominant school, and produced verse of greater strength and individuality. For twenty years, from *Beatrice* (1868) to *A Modern Faust* (1888), Noel worked strenuously and well; and on the whole his career shows steady progress to the end. Probably his best work is the *Modern Faust*; and next to that may be ranked *A Little Child's Monument*, where the sorrow of a personal loss gives depth and reality to the lyrical verse. Unlike O'Shaughnessy and Marston, Noel was strong in thought rather than in style, and while they are thin he is apt to be crude. Frederick Myers (1843–1901), best known now for his work in psychical research, likewise took a colour from the Pre-Raphaelites, but turned their art to purposes of his own. A fine critic as well as a poet, he is more often accomplished than inspired, and he not infrequently falls into the error of adopting a style somewhat too high-pitched for the thought.

The Pre-Raphaelite influence has been strong and widespread, but not altogether wholesome. The tendency of the school has been to over-value emotion and to disparage thought; and on the lesser men the effect has been bad. It is strange that a movement which professed to be a new return to nature, and proclaimed as its principle minute and painstaking fidelity to

her, should, upon the whole, leave the impression of the highest sophistication. The "nature" of the Pre-Raphaelites, in poetry, is not really nature, but art or artifice. There is little of the spirit of Wordsworth in them; indeed there is comparatively little of external nature at all. Rossetti especially showed a marked alienation from external nature. W. B. Scott declared that he had never known him take any visible interest in a natural spectacle; and in his biting way he speaks of Rossetti "working out, with much elaboration and little inspiration, *The Stream's Secret*[1]"—a remark exactly in accord with the impression produced by the poem. Neither is their humanity in the best sense natural. There is something strained and forced in the very earnestness which painters and poets alike strive to delineate. Upon their men and women there seems to rest the weight of centuries and millenniums of life and death; they scarcely ever exhibit the simple joy of living. There is not in the whole range of the Rossetti school a single note comparable with that of Browning's *Saul*:—

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigour! no spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock—
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree,—the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal—the rich dates yellowed over with gold-dust divine,
And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher! the full draught of wine,
And the ship in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!"

In contrast with this the Pre-Raphaelite seems to feel that heart and soul and sense must be absorbed in the struggle with forces too strong for them, and the spirit crushed beneath burdens too heavy to be borne. He has *fin de siècle* written legibly over all his work; and it is doubtless for this reason that he has proved an unfortunate though a potent attraction.

[1] Scott's *Autobiography*, ii. 114.

§ 2. *The Celtic Poets.*

The Celtic revival, noticed in Chapter III, not only continued but grew wider in its range as the century grew older. The rising spirit of nationality encouraged it; and in later Pre-Raphaelitism there is a good deal of the Celtic spirit. Both Burne-Jones and William Morris came of Welsh blood. The latter, however, was Teutonic rather than Celtic in sentiment, and it was the Scandinavian race which he selected for glorification.

Of the Irish writers the greatest, Edward FitzGerald (who, though born in Suffolk, was of Irish parentage), has been dealt with in the preceding chapter. It would be a rash criticism which should ascribe to Celtic blood his peculiar qualities. The younger Aubrey de Vere (1814–1902) is, again, Irish rather by birth, and sometimes in his choice of subject, than in tone of mind. He is far too faithful a Wordsworthian to be adduced as illustrating the Celtic spirit, except, indeed, in respect of the mystical tone which occasionally marks his verse, and which is supposed to be a Celtic trait.

De Vere's literary career extends as far back as 1842, when he published *The Waldenses*, which was followed a year later by *The Search after Proserpine*. The great mass of his work however belongs to a much later date, his publications being most frequent in the sixties and afterwards. It was then, in particular, that he turned to Irish subjects, publishing, among other volumes, *The Sisters, Inisfail, and other Poems* (1861), *The Legends of St Patrick* (1872) and *The Foray of Queen Meave* (1882). His works are of great variety, including essays in all the main divisions of poetry—lyrical, epic and dramatic. Everywhere it is marred by a fatal tendency to diffusion, and not infrequently by the sort of obscurity which comes from thought imperfectly comprehended by the author himself. In his dramas *Alexander the Great* (1874) and *St Thomas of Canterbury* (1876) he shows to disadvantage in comparison with his much more vigorous

and powerful father. His sonnets and lyrics recall Wordsworth too vividly.

There is more of the Celt in Sir Samuel Ferguson (1810–1886), who has been elevated by panegyrists not over-wise to a sort of laureateship of the Irish bards. In point of fact, he had not a tithe of Mangan's poetical genius. The bulk of Ferguson's verse, and especially his more ambitious productions, is late; but from his early years he contributed both prose and verse to *The Dublin University Magazine*, and also to *Blackwood*. Both the amusing tale of *Father Tom and the Pope*, which is sometimes erroneously attributed to Maginn, and *The Forging of the Anchor*, Ferguson's best known and best poem, appeared in the latter periodical. His *Lays of the Western Gael* (1865), *Congal* (1872) and *Poems* (1880) contain most of his poetical work. It is, presumably, on *Congal*, a rhymed epic in five books, that Ferguson's admirers base their claims for him. But mere bulk without inspiration counts for little; and his verse is usually commonplace, and often gravely defective. Thus even in *The Forging of the Anchor* we have in a single line the intolerable jingle of "ground," "around," and "bound." Two of them are part of the rhyme-scheme, but for that very reason it was the more imperative to exclude the third. Again, though false rhymes are common enough, they rarely rival in atrocity the rhyming of "opal" with "bubble" in *By the Isis* Clearly Ferguson had a defective ear, and was hardly the man to sustain himself through the long flight of an epic.

Less ambitious in design and more limited in range, William Allingham (1824–1889) is nevertheless far finer in touch than Ferguson. He had a pretty light lyrical gift and a considerable command of rhythm, succeeding best in the lilting strain, and under the inspiration of the scenes of nature amidst which he was brought up. "He sang," says his countryman Mr W. B. Yeats, "Ballyshannon not Ireland[1]"; and it may well be that the same critic is right in the opinion that to "feel the entire fascination of his [Allingham's] poetry, it is perhaps necessary to have spent one's childhood...in one of those little seaboard Connaught

towns." There is a charming unsought naturalness in his little lays, as if he had, in his own words, "found" them floating here and there, and remembered

> "Each place
> And moment of grace,
> In summer or spring,
> Winter or autumn,
> By sun, moon, stars,
> Or a coal in the bars,
> In market or church,
> Graveyard or dance,
> Where they came without search,
> Were found as by chance."

This sort of inspiration is genuine enough of its kind. But Allingham could not sustain himself through a long poem, and his *Laurence Bloomfield* (1864) is tedious. Naturally too when the source of the inspiration was removed the song ceased. Allingham added little of value after the *Poems* (1850) and the *Day and Night Songs* (1854).

Arthur O'Shaughnessy has been mentioned above, and only a few others of the Irish poets demand brief notice. The *Poems* (1891) of the historian Lecky are worthy of mention for their poetic feeling and happy imagery as well as for the greatness of the writer's work in prose. Denis Florence MacCarthy (1817–1882), whose translation of *Calderon* is strongly commended by Ticknor, Ellen O'Leary (1831–1889), the poet of the Fenians, Thomas D'Arcy McGee (1825–1868), who was assassinated on suspicion of treason to their cause, and Robert Dwyer Joyce (1830–1883), whose *Deirdre* (1876) was among the most popular poems of its class, can merely be named. J. Boyle O'Reilly (1844–1890) belonged to a somewhat later day, and though he was by birth an Irishman, his work was executed in America, where he took refuge after his escape from penal servitude. But Ireland was first in his thoughts always, and the *Exile of the Gael* finely expresses a sentiment felt by thousands who cannot sing. Far superior to any and all of these writers was the brilliant and unhappy Oscar Wilde, who will be noticed elsewhere.

Much of the work of the men who are claimed as "poets" of the Irish national movement is scattered through the columns of obscure magazines and newspapers, and only those who have had the opportunity and the patience to examine the files of these journals are fully entitled to pronounce a judgment upon it; but the collections which have been made seem to show that the value of the literature of the movement has been greatly overestimated. Outside Mangan's work there is little which makes the reader feel that he is in the presence of a *poet*. But while it is not great, this Irish verse presents two features which attest its genuineness, and the grip which the movement had upon the people. In the first place, it tends to the ballad form, and is largely founded upon memories cherished among the peasantry. And in all ages the ballad has been the poetry of the people. Among the Irish writers, almost in proportion to the prevalence of the more complex and ambitious forms of verse—the sonnet, the epic, &c.—is the distance from the true national movement. In the second place, in such collections as Duffy's *Ballad Poetry of Ireland* there are found an unusual number of pieces, often of real merit, by authors who are known only as the writers of one, or two, or three poems. No doubt the reason is that the vivid interest of the national theme inspired men who were not normally poetical. Wolfe (who, as it happens, was an Irishman) is remembered for only one poem, probably because he only on one occasion found a theme which lifted him above himself. Similarly, the spirited "Who fears to speak of '98?" is the work of a man[1] not otherwise known to the muses.

For a reason already indicated, the Welsh Celt had little to say for himself in English verse. His chief representative in that tongue is Sir Lewis Morris (1833–1907), who has enjoyed an astonishing popularity. His *Epic of Hades* (1876–1877) has gone through something like forty editions; and his *Songs of two Worlds* (1871–1875), *Songs Unsung* (1883), *Gycia* (1886) and *Songs of Britain* (1887) have all been bought and presumably read by many thousands. But popularity is not always a test of

[1] Dr J. K. Ingram.

the merit of the poet, and it is probable that Lewis Morris's reputation will fade before many years have passed. His facility was a snare to him. He could, and he did, turn off verses to order, or without order, on all sorts of occasions; and, especially in the Principality, no public event was, in the bard's estimation, complete without an ode by Sir Lewis Morris. He certainly cheapened the Muse. The quality of his work, never very high, declined. The ideas embodied in it became ordinary in the extreme, and they were stretched to the last point of tenuity. He was probably read principally by those who prefer verse which makes no great demands upon thought.

But the period is remarkable for the success with which the Welshman's cousin, the Manxman, has vindicated his place in the national literature, both in verse and prose. The laureate of the little island is Thomas Edward Brown (1830–1897), whose breezy *Fo'cs'le Yarns* (1881) entitle him to no mean place among the writers of dialect, while his bright and racy *Letters* (1900) show that he could, when he chose, write classical English vigorously and well. Brown's other publications were all more or less in the vein of the *Fo'cs'le Yarns*. He chose for his field his native island, which he knew thoroughly; and his yarns are remarkable for the dramatic truth and vigour of the characters they depict. Not only the narrator himself, Tom Baynes, but all who are brought on the scene, parson, or doctor, or sailor, are vividly realised and portrayed. Brown has frequent flashes of real poetic fire, and his rank as a narrator in verse is high. A certain tendency to garrulity is explained by the character of the person into whose mouth the tales are put; but this does not justify the frequent padding of lines with meaningless repetitions and exclamations. These grow wearisome, and instead of giving verisimilitude, they only mar the humour and insight which really distinguish the yarns.

Among the Scottish Celts, Charles Mackay (1814–1889) wrote too much to write very well. His verse is brimful of spirit and energy, but in spite of the fact that he was himself a musician and composer, it has a thin unattractive tinkle. John Stuart Blackie (1809–1895) deserves notice for the work he accom-

plished in promoting the study of Celtic literature, and for his advocacy of the Highlands, men and mountains alike, in season and out of season. He deserves notice, moreover, for the deep impression of his personality which he left, though it was largely by a somewhat boisterous eccentricity that he did it. But, though he has *verve* in abundance, Blackie too lacks the incommunicable something which makes the poet. He is one of those who seem to miss genius by a hair's breadth. Nevertheless, one specimen of his work may be quoted, as much for the sake of the subject as of the poet. No more vigorous word was uttered on the death of Carlyle, and few more wise, than Blackie's :—

> "Thou wert a Titan, but a Titan tossed
> With wild tumultuous heavings in thy breast,
> And fancy-fevered, and cool judgment lost
> In mighty maelstroms of divine unrest.
> What souls were drugged with doubt in sceptic time
> Thy cry disturbed into believing life,
> And fools that raved in prose or writhed in rhyme
> Were sharply surgeoned by thy needful knife :
> But if there were who in this storm of things
> Sighed for sweet calm, and in this dark for light,
> And in this jar for the wise Muse that sings
> All wrong into the ordered ranks of right,
> They thanked not thee, who didst assault their brain
> With thunder-claps and water-spouts for rain."

Greater in literature is the name of George MacDonald (1824–1905), who, though best known as a novelist, would deserve notice as a poet too, were it only for the sake of the exquisite lines, "Where did you come from, Baby dear?" But MacDonald wrote much besides that is well worthy of attention. His first volume, *Within and Without, a Dramatic Poem* (1855), by its concentration upon the history of a soul recalls Browning. It was followed by another volume, *Poems* (1857), and from time to time fresh pieces were added until the bulk was sufficient to fill two considerable volumes. These poems are marked by a simplicity of manner which makes the author particularly successful

in pieces for and about children. But the simplicity is more apparent than real; for nearly all the poems are steeped in mysticism. In such pieces as *Love's Ordeal* and the *Diary of an Old Soul* there is a depth and strength such as we rarely find in religious verse. For to that category nearly all MacDonald's best work belongs, in spirit, if not outwardly; and if he is less perfect than Christina Rossetti or Cardinal Newman, he is hardly less impressive.

There remains one Celt of the most varied gifts, and of genius which ought to be unquestionable, though it has been questioned—Robert Buchanan (1841–1901). Of blood half Scotch, quarter Welsh and quarter English, Buchanan, though born in England, as it were adopted Scotland for his country. He lived and was educated there for about ten years; by his choice of a subject for one of the most ambitious of his poems he proclaimed himself of the Celtic school; and by his power he vindicated his right to be considered its head.

As the son of a Glasgow journalist, Buchanan may be said to have been born on the fringe of literature; but ambition and a well-founded consciousness of high gifts impelled him towards the centre. Even from boyhood he was conscious of the inspiration of the poet. Like many another Scot of talent, he felt his surroundings to be too narrow for him: the world was his oyster and London the place where the oyster must be opened. To this decision he was helped by the friendship he had formed with David Gray (1838–1861), whose three years' seniority were enough to give him considerable influence over a character stronger than his own. The two set out in 1860 for the metropolis,—Gray to creep home and die in the following year, Buchanan to fight a long hard battle, to write poems, dramas and novels, and to tell simply, tastefully and beautifully the pathetic story of his friend's life.

The short memoir of David Gray is a model of what a biography ought to be. There are few facts to record, but the story of the Kirkintilloch weaver's poet-son is full of human interest, and in some seventy or eighty pages Buchanan gives a vivid impression of character and talent. Gray had a very considerable, perhaps he had even a great, poetic gift. "There

written the *Inverburn* and the *North Coast Poems*. It is not merely a matter of dialect with Buchanan. He could use dialect with skill; but the brand of nationality is on many of his poems which are written in pure English. We see it in the scenery and in the characters. The coast is the east coast of Scotland, the people are Scotch sailors, Scotch peasants and shepherds, and their mothers and wives and sisters. Another national note of a very different quality is sounded in *The Book of Orm*; but in the group of poems now under consideration the basis, as has been hinted, is realism. It is, however, a realism warmed by imagination, and occasionally there are even hints of mysticism, foreshadowing *The Book of Orm*.

The *London Poems*, different as is their setting from that of these poems of the North, have more kinship with them than is at first sight apparent. The idyllic and legendary elements are gone, and the realism is more pronounced; but the tales are still touched and lit with imagination which lifts them out of the gutters of the "mean streets" wherein they are enacted, and sets them on a higher plane than that of the more recent stories of sordid London life. Buchanan was always poetic in mind, and he could never descend to such depths. The conclusion of *Tiger Bay* expresses the spirit which inspires the *London Poems*. The human in the dens of London vice is hardly distinguishable from the bestial in the Indian jungle; but nevertheless in the former there is just the spark of soul which, fanned and cherished, will burn away the bestial:—

"God said, moreover: 'The spark shall grow—
'Tis blest, it gathers, its flame shall lighten,
Bless it and nurse it—let it brighten!
'Tis scattered abroad, 'tis a Seed I sow.
And the seed is a Soul, and the Soul is the Human:
And it lighteth the face with a sign and a flame.
Not unto beasts have I given the same,
But to man and to woman.
Mark! mark!
The light shall scatter the dark:
Where murmur the Wind and the Rain,
Where the jungle darkens the plain,
And in street and lane.'

.....So faint, so dim, so sad to seeing,
Behold it burning! Only a spark!
So faint as yet, and so dim to mark,
In the tigress-eyes of the human being.
Fan it, feed it, in love and duty,
Track it, watch it in every place,—
Till it burns the bestial frame and face
To its own dim beauty.
Mark! mark!
A spark that grows in the dark;
A spark that burns in the brain;
Spite of the Wind and the Rain,
Spite of the Curse and the Stain
Over the Sea and the Plain
And in street and lane."

Though there is as much power in these *London Poems* as in the poems of the North Country, they are not so pleasant to read; and as pleasure is one of the ends of poetry, they are for that reason less poetical. The sordid streets and dens are not more real than the wild northern coast and the lonely glens, while they are infinitely less sweet and wholesome. The inhabitants of those streets are not more, rather they are less, human than the fishermen and rustics. *Nell* is full of strength; but it is not the kind of poem we elect to remember. If it abides in the memory it does so by reason of its force, uninvited. Though none of the *London Poems* is superior to *Nell*, some of the others are more attractive. In spite of its sordidness, *Lily* is beautiful from its pathos. *The Little Milliner* is a London love-tale, very simply and pleasingly told. *Edward Crowhurst* has pathos of another sort. It is a wonderfully terse and strong narrative of the life of a labourer-poet, who is flattered, patronised, corrupted, neglected, and at last becomes mad. It embodies many of the facts of the life of John Clare, who was evidently in Buchanan's mind, with, perhaps, Burns and his own friend Gray. His imagination had been rendered sensitive by what he had witnessed in the case of Gray, and the idea of "mighty poets in their misery dead" touched it keenly.

From these groups of poems it is easy to detect the difference

between Buchanan and the poets who reigned in his early day. It is a wide one. His cry is, back to nature and reality; not to nature as she is when cultivated and trimmed and pruned by man, nor to human character as it is when smoothed and polished by education and convention; but to nature free and wild, to characters unsophisticated, strong of passion, rude and forcible of speech.

> "I have wrought
> No garland of the rose and passion-flower
> Grown in a careful garden in the sun;
> But I have gathered samphire dizzily,
> Close to the hollow roaring of a sea."

Buchanan had no quarrel with the classical poets: for a moment, as we have seen, he even followed their lead, though afterwards he knew that their method was wrong for him. But he had a quarrel with the Pre-Raphaelite poets; and it is probably their "careful garden in the sun" to which he refers in these lines. His critical instinct was not wrong in suggesting to him the sense of an irreconcilable difference between himself and the Pre-Raphaelites, for he and they are in spirit poles asunder. But he would have done well to reflect that Parnassus is a mountain of more than one peak and of innumerable slopes and ridges. There might be room for them to fulfil their mission as well as for him—the word is appropriate, for both Buchanan and the Pre-Raphaelites are rather obviously conscious of a mission.

The Northern poems and the London poems constitute two great sections of Buchanan's work, but his restless intellect impelled him to try many other things. *Napoleon Fallen* (1871) was among his failures. In *Saint Abe and his Seven Wives* (1872) and in *White Rose and Red* (1873) he crossed the Atlantic for his subject. But of course he could not possess that intimacy of knowledge and depth of sympathy which mark his North Country poems. E. C. Stedman, who on this point speaks with authority, declares that Buchanan "has succeeded only in being faithful to a British ideal of American frontier life." These two poems were published anonymously and the secret of their authorship was very carefully guarded. Buchanan was then under the cloud

caused by his virulent attack upon Rossetti in *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, and he believed that only under the veil of anonymity could he hope to receive fair treatment from the critics. The two poems certainly were welcomed with unusual warmth; but this might be due to the fact that they are stories in verse, lucidly and vigorously told.

In the opinion of many, however, Buchanan achieved his highest triumphs in the Celtic poems, and especially in *The Book of Orm* (1870), where the quondam realist showed himself a pronounced mystic. Buchanan was conscious of the Highland blood in his veins: he was a clansman, a Celt; and it was this clan-feeling which hurried him into the Celtic Revival, to which his principal contribution was this *Book of Orm*.

Whatever may be the value of the distinction between the Celtic and the Teutonic elements in English literature, what Buchanan himself regarded as the Celtic element in this poem is plain enough. The poet has declared that the object of *The Book of Orm* is to "vindicate the ways of God to man." But the phrase is far too clear and definite. We no longer know the Deity as we know "the man in the next street"; and a reasoned justification like that of Milton or that of Pope would be out of place, and is not attempted, in Buchanan's poem. But still, beneath the veil of mysticism there dimly glimmer those great problems of life and death which occupied and perplexed Tennyson and Browning as well as Buchanan.

Buchanan sent forth *The Book of Orm* as an avowed contribution to racial poetry. Perhaps he was too conscious and deliberate in his purpose to be wholly natural. The keynote is struck in the prefatory lines:—

> "Read these faint rimes of Mystery,
> O Celt, at home and o'er the sea;
> The bond is loosed—the poor are free—
> The world's great future rests with thee!
>
> Till the soil—bid cities rise—
> Be strong, O Celt—be rich, be wise—
> But still, with those divine grave eyes,
> Respect the realm of Mysteries."

The whole poem is in the same spirit. The author evidently regarded mysticism as the essence of the Celtic contribution to poetry; and *The Book of Orm* is profoundly mystical. In this lies at once its charm and, perhaps, its defect. Nothing makes a greater draught upon the poetical powers than mysticism: it is so difficult to keep it from passing into mistiness. Buchanan's powers were great, but possibly not quite great enough for his purpose. For one thing, he is not sufficiently a master of metre and rhythm; for in proportion as the poet leaves the world of hard fact behind him, the sensuous enchantments of verse gain importance. Where there is a definite story, or a definite thought addressed to the understanding, the simpler harmonies of verse will suffice. Pope's couplets are nearly as good as their kind could be made. But Tennyson's *Lotos-Eaters* and Coleridge's *Christabel* demand a very much more subtle rhythm. In this respect Buchanan was a competent but not a great artist. There is a roughness, often intentional, but nevertheless unpleasing, in the verse of *The Book of Orm*.

Perhaps too Buchanan was not altogether great enough in thought; and he was certainly not spontaneous enough in his use of the supernatural. He could call spirits from the vasty deep; but the depth from which they came was not so profound as that from which certain mere Teutons have drawn. Sometimes (conspicuously in the *Prayer from the Deeps*) there is too plain a revelation of the modern critical spirit, which harmonises ill with mysticism. On the other hand, the section to which this prayer belongs, *The Devil's Mystics*, is as a whole strongly conceived and strongly written; and still more powerful is *The Vision of the Man Accurst*.

Another group of the Celtic poems, the *Coruisken Sonnets*, are all fine, and some of them are exceptionally beautiful. Among the best are *The Hills on their Thrones*, *King Blaabhein* and *Blaabhein in the Mists*,—titles which remind the reader that Alexander Smith found inspiration in the same scenes. Buchanan attempts no transcript of scenery; but he achieves something far greater, a rendering of its spirit.

The Vision of the Man Accurst deals with a kind of theme in

the treatment of which Buchanan was a master. It is akin to, but stronger and more original than, *The Ballad of Judas Iscariot.* Though the latter is essentially Buchanan's own, yet once and again the poet draws hints from the past. Not only is it pervaded with the spirit of the old ballads, but there are hints from Hood's *Eugene Aram* and from Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner.* There are no such echoes in *The Vision of the Man Accurst*; and in depth and force as well as in originality that poem seems to be the greater of the two.

For the first ten years of his literary life Buchanan's work had been mainly poetical; but shortly after the publication of *White Rose and Red* he became conspicuous both as a writer for the stage, in which capacity he won fame and money, and as the author of a series of novels bearing the mark of his strong personality and his earnestness of purpose. These activities necessarily drew his attention away from verse; but, though he was convinced that the public did not want poetry and would not reward the poet, the old love survived, and the poetic output of the later period is in the aggregate large. Some of it is as good as anything he ever wrote, but on the whole the poet will take his place rather by virtue of his earlier than of his later work. Like many others, he had the ambition to write long poems; and he thought, erroneously, that it was pure perversity or dislike of poetry as such on the part of the public, that made his more ambitious ventures less successful than some of the shorter pieces. Though his *Balder the Beautiful: A Song of Divine Death* (1877) contains some fine poetry (best of all, perhaps, the *Proem* to his wife), it is not a well-knit whole. Buchanan justly claimed for it the praise of originality; for it owes little to what he called "the vulgar myths of the Edda." But this phrase suggests a question. Surely it must be wrong to pour new wine into old bottles, thinking all the time that the bottles are worthless; and the reason why Buchanan's "song of divine death" is unsatisfactory may perhaps be found in this incongruity between the original and that which is fashioned from it.

Problems such as that indicated by the sub-title were at this period occupying much of Buchanan's attention, and they profoundly influenced his prose as well as his verse. He had been

bred in ignorance of the creeds of the Churches, for his father was a sceptic and a follower of Robert Owen the Socialist. Buchanan had therefore no "Hebrew old clothes" to cast off; on the contrary, it was in manhood that he gradually familiarised himself with, and in some degree adopted, conceptions which the child generally drinks in with its mother's milk. But he never approached what is commonly regarded as orthodoxy, and, what is much more serious, he never seems to have been able to make up his own mind. "*If*," he writes on the death of his wife to his friend, Roden Noel, "*if* this parting is only for a time, I see its blessedness—but if, as I dread and fear, it is a parting *forever*, what then[1]?" In the following year he dedicated his poems to his dead wife, "weeping and sorrowing, yet in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection[2]." This looks like conviction; but later we come again upon evidences of doubt. Buchanan's next long poem, *The City of Dream* (1888), an allegory dedicated "to the sainted spirit of John Bunyan," is the story of the pilgrimage of Ishmael (Buchanan himself) to seek the heavenly city. The picture of Christopolis shows clearly enough that the hand of Ishmael was against most men, and suggests why most men's hands were against him. It is no reproach to the poet that he does not answer the unanswerable. A work like *The City of Dream* must, in the nature of things, be vague and inconclusive. But it is not only inconclusive, it is unsuggestive; the author himself is in the mist, and naturally he cannot lead the reader into sunlight. The curious catechism he constructed with reference to *The Wandering Jew* (1893) illustrates the confusion of his mind. There he declares his belief in a future life; but then he adds: "It is only a belief, not a certainty, a hope, a faith even, not a reality. The testimony of all Science is against it[3]."

The Wandering Jew is the most remarkable and by far the most intelligible of the poems of this class. Though it was begun long before the others, it was the last to be published. As early as 1866 Buchanan had written part of it, and he had finished it some years before its publication. The reason was not doubt as to its value—it was "his favourite child"—but a fixed idea that it would

[1] Jay's *Robert Buchanan*, 221. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* 264.

prove the end of his career. The fundamental conception of a Christ old and grey, worn and weary, is impressive and pathetic. The poet finds ample material to support his thesis that the professed followers of Christ have, under the cloak of his name, wrought all the sins and cruelties most abhorrent to his nature. Thus he explains the weariness and sadness of the aged figure and makes intelligible his concluding prayer for death and the answer of the Judge:—

> "Nay!
> Death that brought peace thyself didst seek to slay!
> Death that was merciful and very fair,
> Sweet dove-eyed Death that hush'd the Earth's despair,
> Death that shed balm on tirèd eyes like thine,
> Death that was Lord of Life and all Divine,
> Thou didst deny us, offering instead
> The Soul's fierce famine that can ne'er be fed—
> Death shall abide to bless all things that be,
> But evermore shall turn aside from thee."

Buchanan was the possessor of one more talent which, in justice to him, must still be noticed. He had the gift of humour in a higher degree than any other recent poet except Mr Rudyard Kipling. *Saint Abe* and *White Rose and Red* are richly humorous; so are a number of the North Country poems. *Kitty Kemble* blends satire with humour, and *The Wedding of Shon Maclean* has a wild rollick unequalled since Outram's *Law Lyrics*. It might be compared to a scene from *Charles O'Malley*, in verse, and transferred from the Irish bogs to the Highland mountains.

The range of Buchanan is such as only an extraordinary spirit could have compassed. And to estimate him aright we must also take account of his independence. This is the secret of his combative career. He both felt himself to be and called himself an Ishmael, and he struck out fiercely against those whose hand he believed to be raised against him. Even where he adopted current forms of verse, he used them in a way of his own. He wrote idylls in an age of idylls; but his have far more of mother earth about them than the Tennysonian idylls. Buchanan's are related to these as his countryman Allan Ramsay's pastoral is related to the pastorals

of Pope. In his own way Buchanan was a leader of a new return to nature. He was spokesman for a generation rising into manhood when the impulse of the early Victorian poets was beginning to fail, and when their ideals were no longer accepted as all that the heart could desire. The North Country and the London poems were his attempt to satisfy the want, and of all that were made it was the one which offered most hope. The principal alternatives were such Neo-Pre-Raphaelitism as we find in O'Shaughnessy, and the graceful society verse of Mr Austin Dobson and his followers. But society verse can never be the staple of great poetry; and Pre-Raphaelitism carried within it from the start the seeds of decay. A sense of the preciosity, even of the masters, roused Buchanan's wrath; and he made it his business to combat this and all the other signs of decadence. But, while Buchanan himself had imitators, he founded no great school. This was partly owing to his fault, or rather his insufficiency. He could not fuse the elements of greatness that were in him. Had he been able to weld the mysticism of *Orm* with the realism of the *London Poems*, the result would have been something greater than English literature has produced in recent years. As it is, they stand apart—opposite shores separated by a gulf across which Buchanan has built no bridge.

§ 3. *The Poetry of Pessimism.*

In the poetry of the nineteenth century we have seen represented nearly every shade of faith and doubt and indifference; but there still remains the phase of blank disbelief and despair; and it happens that that too has found consummate expression in the verse of one of the greatest and one of the least appreciated of recent poets. James Thomson (1834–1882), author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, is, to a superficial view, a bundle of contradictions—a man of unfeigned friendliness and attractive geniality, yet emphatically the poet of gloom and despair; one who disbelieved in human progress, yet who spent great part of his life in writing, often without pay, for periodicals whose end was to further human

progress; one of the most independent and original of men, yet one who echoes in his verse a greater number of other poets than almost any of his contemporaries. He has been called the English Poe and the English Leopardi. The initials, B.V. (Bysshe Vanolis), under which he wrote, proclaim his kinship to Shelley and Novalis (of which name Vanolis is an anagram). And he has either avowed, or there is evident in his work, some indebtedness to men so different as Heine, a number of whose poems he translated, Dante, whose imagination seems, in lower power, to be re-incarnate in him, De Quincey, both the Brownings, and his namesake and countryman, James Thomson, the poet of *The Seasons* and of *The Castle of Indolence*. If the later Thomson had been a man of weak or illogical intellect, if he had not known his own mind, or if he had been insincere, much of this would have been susceptible of an easy explanation. But he was none of these things. He knew very definitely what he thought and meant, and he sacrificed all chance of worldly advancement for the privilege of being himself and speaking out. The solution of such enigmas must be sought in Thomson's parentage and life; and, luckless in almost every other respect, he has been fortunate in his biographer, Mr H. S. Salt, and his editor, Mr B. Dobell, who have written of him with sympathy and admiration, yet without the vice of special pleading and groundless panegyric into which admiring biographers and editors so easily fall.

James Thomson was the son of a sailor, a mate in the merchant service, who was disabled by paralysis when the boy was only six years old. The father lived till 1853, but was unable after his illness to provide for his family, which consequently fell into poverty. James Thomson was therefore admitted to the Royal Caledonian Asylum, where he was educated till 1850. Shortly after his admission his mother died. In later days James Thomson found no place in his scheme of thought for evolution or heredity; if he had, he would have been less gloomy. Yet there is good reason to believe that he himself strikingly illustrated the law of inheritance from both the paternal and the maternal strain. His father, says Mr Salt, "is described by those who knew him personally as a delightful companion, bright and cheerful in dis-

position, reading and reciting well, fond of music, and singing a good song in congenial society." After his misfortune the elder Thomson is said to have fallen into habits of intemperance; and though Mr Salt says that "no direct evidence of such habits is discoverable," he adds that "Thomson once told a friend, in after years, that intemperance ran in the family, and that 'nearly all the members of it who had brains, especially a gifted aunt of his, fell victims to its power.'" Of the mother we are told that she was "a deeply religious woman of the Irvingite faith, whose nature, unlike that of her husband, seems to have been of a somewhat melancholy cast." Melancholy and mystical religion on the one side, on the other geniality *plus* a hereditary tendency to alcohol, —there is so much of the poet James Thomson here that we may reasonably suppose the superficial contradictions of his character and career to be due to these divergent tendencies.

Thomson became an army schoolmaster, and for about a year and a half (1851–1853) filled the post of assistant-teacher at Ballincollig near Cork, where he fell in love with a beautiful girl named Matilda Weller, whose death in 1853 left a profound and lasting impression upon him. Some have traced his pessimism to this bereavement; and it is certain that he cherished the girl's memory as long as he lived, and that many passages in his verse are inspired by this early love. At Ballincollig too Thomson made the acquaintance of Charles Bradlaugh, who helped him to reach those negative conclusions towards which he was slowly moving. On his dismissal from the army, in 1862, for a trivial offence, Thomson resided with Bradlaugh, to whose paper, *The National Reformer*, he was already a contributor; and Bradlaugh also procured him a clerkship in a solicitor's office. Henceforth Thomson held a succession of clerkships and secretaryships, but found no sure and lasting employment. Sheer ill-luck accounted for much; but probably the intemperance which grew upon him would explain still more. It was doubtless at the root of the unhappy misunderstanding which in 1875 ended his long connexion with Bradlaugh. Before that end came Thomson had contributed to *The National Reformer* many of his best pieces, including *The City of Dreadful Night*, which appeared in its columns in 1874.

The quarrel with Bradlaugh was disastrous to Thomson. For "seven songless years" after *The City of Dreadful Night* he wrote no poetry except a few lyrics at long intervals. He had no regular employment, his best literary connexion was broken, and he moved rapidly towards the end now inevitable. Just before the close, stimulated by the success of *The City of Dreadful Night, and other Poems* (1880) and *Vane's Story, Weddah and Om-el-Bonain, and other Poems* (1880), Thomson once more began to write verse, and in the last few months of his life he produced some of the finest among his shorter pieces. But it was only a parting gleam. On June 3, 1882, after "four terrible weeks of intemperance, homelessness and desperation[1]," James Thomson died in University Hospital, London, whither he had been removed from the rooms of his friend, the blind poet Philip Bourke Marston.

All the volumes bearing Thomson's name are late publications. Besides those already mentioned they are *Essays and Phantasies* (1881)—he was an admirable writer of poetic and also of satiric prose—and the posthumous volume, *A Voice from the Nile, and other Poems* (1884). His writings are, however, the work of some twenty-five or twenty-six years, from 1856 to 1882; and especially, as his biographer points out, of those years, 1862 to 1875, when his connexion with *The National Reformer* was closest. His three chief poems, *The City of Dreadful Night*, *Weddah* (1866–1867) and *Vane's Story* (1864), all belong to these years; and so does his prose masterpiece, *A Lady of Sorrow* (1862–1864).

There can be no doubt that the dominant note in Thomson is the note of pessimism, and the masterpiece in which he has most impressively sounded it is *The City of Dreadful Night*. It is a relatively late poem: Thomson was forty years of age at its publication; and the idea is natural that the sombre philosophy it embodies must have been the product of years and multiplied disappointments. A consideration of dates shows that there is really very little ground for such a supposition. Ten years before *The City of Dreadful Night*, in the concluding part of *A Lady of Sorrow*, we meet with what Thomson's biographer justly calls "the prose counterpart" of that poem; and again, before that, in *The*

[1] Salt's *Life of Thomson*, 180.

Doom of a City (1859), we have an earlier and cruder treatment of the central idea of *The City of Dreadful Night*. In the earlier poem the abode of humanity is a city of ghastly petrified figures; in the later and greater one it is a city of beings living, moving, and capable of suffering under the terrible cloud of despair which overhangs them. We may, if we choose, suppose that Thomson's despair had its source in the death of Matilda Weller; but it seems more reasonable to conclude that it arose from a constitutional tendency to melancholia, fortified by habits of indulgence in alcohol, which were also constitutional, and further strengthened, no doubt, by bereavement, failure and misfortune. He had more resemblance to Poe, not merely in his writings, but in his life and in those predispositions which made it what it was, than to any other man who has ever written English.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that while Thomson is justly described as the poet of pessimism, there is another and less sombre strain in his verse, and—what is far more surprising—that this too lasts to the end. In the early period the gloom is lightened by such comparatively genial and bright pieces as *The Lord of the Castle of Indolence* (1859) and the two *Idylls of Cockaigne, Sunday up the River* and *Sunday at Hampstead*. At the very end come three poems equally bright and beautiful,—*Richard Forest's Midsummer Night* (1881), *He heard her Sing* (1882) and *At Belvoir* (1882). The last, says the host in whose house he stayed, "recalls three days of incessant mirth and midsummer pleasure, Thomson being chief jester[1]." Thus the geniality survived to the end as well as the gloom; and from first to last Thomson was the same complex being in whose nature the "threads of joy and woe" were always mingled.

The pessimistic side has been so emphasised that the more cheerful one is sometimes wholly forgotten or ignored. It is therefore the more necessary to insist that Thomson wrote a good many poems in which pessimism is not expressed. His *Lord of the Castle of Indolence*, in its rich voluptuous metre and imagery, is worthy even of his namesake's beautiful poem which suggested it. The *Idylls of Cockaigne* are two series of very beautiful lyrics,

[1] Salt's *Life of Thomson*, 164.

full of joy in nature and beauty and life, sometimes in a rushing metre singularly unlike the motionless brooding of *The City of Dreadful Night*. The pieces are dramatic; but nevertheless they show that Thomson fully understood the philosophy of optimism as well as that of pessimism. Surely the author of the following lines still felt, on occasion, the zest of life:—

"Drink! drink! open your mouth!
This air is as rich as wine;
Flowing with balm from the sunny south,
And health from the western brine.

Drink! drink! open your mouth!
This air is as strong as wine:
My brain is drugged with the balm o' the south,
And rolls with the western brine.

Drink! drink! open your mouth!
This air is the choicest wine:
From that golden grape the Sun, i' the south
Of Heaven's broad vine."

Of Thomson's three longest poems, two cannot be unreservedly classified as pessimistic. *Vane's Story* and *Weddah and Om-el-Bonain* are both sad, but in neither is the gloom unrelieved. Of *Vane's Story* Thomson said that he had thrown "the reins on the neck of Pegasus and let him go whither he would." Nevertheless Pegasus was carefully guided. The poem is really a fragment of autobiography, containing, under the beautiful allegory of the fountain, an accurate description of his own life.

The pessimistic poems therefore, though the greatest and the most characteristic, are not the whole of Thomson's work. They certainly need all the relief that can be found within his writings; for there is nothing in English literature more gloomy and depressing than the two poems and the prose-piece already named, the *Mater Tenebrarum* (1859), *To Our Ladies of Death* (1861), *The Poet to his Muse* (1882) and *Insomnia* (1882). It takes all the poet's powerful imagination, all his wealth of imagery, all the stateliness of his style, to make these poems bearable. For sustained intensity of gloom *The City of Dreadful Night* is probably unparalleled; and the intellectual resource displayed in

the delineation of the city wherein the melancholic dwell shows Thomson to have been one of the most highly gifted men of his time. *Insomnia*, shorter and less complex, sounds perhaps even deeper abysses of woe and suffering, and reveals one of the causes which produced it. For many years Thomson was a victim to sleeplessness, so that his poem has the dreadful reality of personal experience. It is impossible to withhold from these pieces the tribute of deep admiration for the masterly execution; but yet the thought forces itself upon the reader that it is *not* good to be here. If Thomson's philosophy were true, even truth itself would be dear-bought at the price of belief in it; for it must result in present misery and, sooner or later, must paralyse action.

It has been already remarked that had Thomson found a place for evolution in his philosophy, he might have been less gloomy. For his pessimism was founded on the conviction that there was no hope for humanity any more than for himself, and that the appearance of progress was a mere illusion. He had been taught in childhood the faith as it was delivered unto Calvin; he soon found reason to believe that that faith would not bear the light of modern thought; he could discover nothing to set in its place, and so he went on from negation to negation until he found himself face to face with blank despair. Logically, he ought never to have troubled himself about his fellow-men, and perhaps, logically, he ought to have committed suicide. But men, both atheist and orthodox, are often better than their theories. And in spite of his failings, which were not voluntary but the effects of disease, Thomson, while he was master of himself, remained faithful and lovable to his friends, chivalrous to women, gentle and kind and patient with little children.

§ 4. *The Later Poetesses.*

The literary activity of women tends, as time goes on, more and more to prose fiction; and it is remarkable that of the numerous female novelists comparatively few show even a slight talent for poetry. Dinah Maria Craik (1826–1887), whose beautiful *Philip*

my King ought to preserve for her a small niche among the poets, is a rare exception. But notwithstanding this diversion there have been many female writers of verse, only one or two of whom, after Mrs Browning and Christina Rossetti, have been mentioned. For the most part they are barely worthy of mention. Sentimentality and the fatal cult of prettiness vitiate the work of all but a very few. The home-spun verse of Eliza Cook (1818–1889) appeals only to the Philistine. The rhetorical Menella Bute Smedley (1820–1877) repeats the faults of Mrs Hemans and has far less redeeming merit. Dora Greenwell (1821–1882) has the mystical piety of Christina Rossetti, without Christina Rossetti's charm. Emily Pfeiffer (1827–1890), Sarah Williams (1841–1868) and many others show by triviality of treatment that they are versifiers rather than poets. The critic might be tempted to speak of triviality of theme; but the lyrical masters, whom these writers follow at a distance, have shown that the simplest theme may be great in the hands of a true poet. It was wisdom on their part to be content with simple subjects. A few, like Isabella Harwood (Ross Neil) (1840?–1888), tried the drama and other complex forms only to prove that their powers were inadequate to the task. Perhaps none but Augusta Webster has shown a force and breadth of mind adequate to anything.

The world from the first has refused to recognise George Eliot as a poet, and the world has been right; but when the great novelist chose to write verse it was impossible to ignore her. *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868) is far below the level of her prose both in force of thought and in eloquence. In *The Legend of Jubal* (1874) the width of the gap is diminished, but it is still great. It is in her shorter poems that she shows best. The sonnets, *Brother and Sister*, if they were the work of an ordinary writer, would be thought good; but in the opening chapters of *The Mill on the Floss* George Eliot herself has given the substance of them in prose so much more poetical that they only serve to prove that she is out of her place among the writers of verse. The best of her productions is the short blank-verse poem, "O may I join the choir invisible"; and it is of such merit that if she had left any considerable body of verse of similar excellence, the judgment

which ranks her among the prose-writers only would need revision.

Adelaide Anne Procter (1825–1864) was the daughter of a poet, Barry Cornwall, and almost from the cradle she betrayed to the discerning her gift and her destiny. John Kemble called her an elf-child, but his sister Fanny pronounced her rather "the prophecy of a poet." She had an album for her favourite pieces before she was mistress of the pen sufficiently to fill it with her own hand. The company she met and the conversation she heard at her father's table strengthened the bent of her mind and developed her tastes, and had she chosen she might have found through him an easy entrance into the field of letters. She preferred to be accepted or rejected on her own merits. After publishing a few pieces elsewhere she began to send her poems under the pseudonym of Mary Berwick to *Household Words*; and it was not until he praised them at her father's table that the editor, Charles Dickens, learnt who his contributor was. Her writings were collected in 1858 under the title of *Legends and Lyrics*. New poems were added in the edition published three years later, another volume entitled *A Chaplet of Verses* appeared in 1862, and in the beginning of 1864 she died, leaving her veteran father to survive her for ten years. She was worn out with her labours, literary and charitable: the eager soul within had "fretted the pigmy body to decay." But although Adelaide Procter was, in her measure, a genuine poet, she had done nothing great. She had little originality. She did, on the whole rather weakly, what other poets were doing better. *The Cradle Song of the Poor* and *God's Gifts* touch upon those social questions to which everybody in those days was drawn; but *The Song of the Shirt* and *The Cry of the Children* serve the purpose far better. *The Voice of the Wind* is pleasant verse, but it is little more. The wind has been on the field of battle, on the desolate ocean, on the lonely moor, in the gloomy forest; and there it has seen just what it has seen in verse a hundred times over. Miss Procter was popular: ten years after her death her works were in greater demand than those of any living poet except Tennyson: but this popularity was probably due quite as

much to her defects as to her merits. A touch of sentimentality attracts, while fiery passion terrifies, the great middle class, which buys poetry for the adornment of the best parlour. Miss Procter was neither too great nor too small. The sing-song of her favourite measure was soothing, and promoted slumber if perchance the volume was taken up after dinner: to the more fastidious ear it soon became monotonous and wearisome. Her piety made her obviously safe, and her Roman Catholicism (she changed her faith about the year 1851) was never so thrust forward as to offend the Protestant. It was this piety, combined with a good mouth-filling volume of sound, and a meaning judiciously diluted, that made her two songs *Sent to Heaven* (otherwise *The Message*) and *The Lost Chord* so widely popular. It is a triumph of a kind. To the latter especially tens of thousands have listened enraptured; they have felt and probably have been better for it; and they who are doubtful whether it means anything must suppress their doubts and do homage to the *fait accompli*.

Jean Ingelow (1820–1897) was of a higher order. Never, except perhaps for one brief moment in *Judge Not*, did Adelaide Procter show anything like the strength which we find in the *High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire*; and though that is generally reputed to be Jean Ingelow's masterpiece she has left a considerable body of work at least comparable with it in excellence. She was somewhat older than Miss Procter and figured earlier as an authoress. Her first publication, a volume of verse, was followed immediately by a novel, and throughout she carried on the double career of poet and writer of fiction. It is however her poetry which gives her the best chance of remembrance, and her first great success was won by the volume of *Poems* published in 1863, which was so popular that a fourth edition had to be printed before the year closed. A second and a third series of *Poems* followed in 1876 and 1885; and between the first and the second there had been interposed the *Story of Doom and other Poems* (1867). These volumes contain nearly all Jean Ingelow's work that is of note, and they contain a good deal besides, for few poets gain more by judicious selection than she.

It would be extravagance to call Jean Ingelow a great poet. The keen wit of Calverley detected and exposed her weaknesses; for he was thinking of her in the ballad, "The auld wife sat at her ivied door," and "In moss-prankt dell" is a skit on *Divided*. Yet it is not too much to say that among the women-poets of the century she is surpassed only by Mrs Browning, Christina Rossetti, Emily Brontë and Augusta Webster. She does not weary us with distressing monotony like the other minor singers; she has a great deal of that strength which is perhaps arrogantly, yet not without cause, supposed to be masculine; she is never content with mere prettiness; she is daring in the treatment of rhythm and metre, and even where she is almost harsh, the harshness is more pleasing than the limpid trickle of Adelaide Procter or Menella Smedley. *Echo and the Ferry* has a ring of Browning. *Requiescat in Pace* is boldly imaginative, and in its touch of the supernatural recalls Rossetti. *Divided* shows a love of nature which would have won the respect of Wordsworth, though the treatment is quite different from his. *Honours*, *Persephone* and *Songs of Seven* may also be named as favourable specimens of her work. These pieces not only show a fairly wide range of imagination, but they prove that the writer was endowed with vigour of thought and a happy turn for style as well. Fortunately she contented herself as a rule with writing short poems, lyrical or of a nature akin to the lyric. When she tried longer pieces, as in the *Story of Doom*, the quality of her work deteriorated.

Jean Ingelow was respectable, but Augusta Webster (1837–1894) was great. For sheer strength she has no rival among the women-poets of England except Emily Brontë, and, in respect of reputation, she is farther from the place which is justly her due than almost any other writer of recent years. She has been compared to Browning, and several reasons may be given to justify the comparison. Few writers, whether male or female, are less distant from him in force and originality of thought. Like him, she handled with great success the dramatic monologue. Like him, she wrote dramas as well, some of them not unworthy to stand beside his. Like him too, she was a scholar and a translator from the Greek.

Augusta Webster began her literary career early with *Blanche Lisle and other Poems* (1860). But her qualities were not such as mature rapidly, and she hardly became a force to reckon with before the publication of *Dramatic Studies* (1866). From this date onwards there is not a volume she published that does not contain matter well worthy of attention; not a little of it must be called great without qualification. Among her publications are *A Woman Sold* (1867) and *Portraits* (1870)—perhaps the most remarkable of all. *The Auspicious Day* (1872) was her first drama. *In a Day* (1882) and *The Sentence* (1887) show the scholar as well as the dramatist, the scene of both being laid in imperial Rome, and the matter such as only a writer well acquainted with the history and literature could have handled. In these dramas she comes as near success as any writer of recent years except Tennyson, and that she does not achieve it completely is, perhaps, as much due to her merits as to any positive defect in the plays. She could not truckle or pander to the whims of the day, and her close-knit thought was ill adapted to the taste of a public which wanted amusement rather than thought.

In spite of the merits of the dramas it is probably as a writer of dramatic monologues that Augusta Webster will live. Here she missed popularity for the same reasons that for many years made Browning unpopular. She too has a super-abundance of thought, and she too is often rough and harsh in her versification; but she too makes splendid atonement for her faults. There is austere grandeur in the conception of *The Snow Waste*, and *A Preacher* and *A Painter* are masterly studies. But it is in the studies of women that she penetrates deepest. Some of these studies have scarcely a parallel in literature. Perhaps the most powerful is *A Castaway*, but *Faded* and *Tired* are only less admirable, as are also, in another style, *Sister Annunciata* and *By the Looking Glass*. In some of these poems the pity and pain are almost too great for verse. Mrs Webster felt deeply the pathos of the destiny of her sex, and dealt with it as no man ever could have dealt. *A Castaway* has been compared with Rossetti's *Jenny*, but the points of view are wholly different: the *Castaway* is what *Jenny* might have been if Jenny herself had taken the pen from

Rossetti's hand. It is therefore, though inferior in technical skill, a far rarer performance than Rossetti's. For the same reason Mrs Webster's other portraits of women have a quite unique value, inasmuch as very few women have had the force of thought necessary to draw such portraits, and none who had it has used it so—at least in English.

One more writer of a later date also distinguished herself for power and boldness of thought. Constance Naden (1858–1889) was not, indeed, the equal of Augusta Webster, but she had a genuine gift for poetry, and had she not been lured away after "wandering fires," even in her short life she might have won considerable fame. But she was by nature inclined to philosophy and science, she fell under the influence of those who strengthened her inclination; and so, instead of a poet, we have a follower of Herbert Spencer who did not live long enough to show whether she could have done anything original in philosophy or not. Her *Pantheist's Song of Immortality* is, however, proof sufficient that she was a true poet.

§ 5. *Miscellaneous Poets.*

There remain a number of poets, sometimes of merit, sometimes perhaps only of notoriety, whom it would be misleading to associate with any of the foregoing groups. For example, William Cory (1823–1892), whose birth-name was Johnson, went his own way and did his own work, and, while he moved minds that moved the world, remained till the close of his life wholly unknown to the wider public. As an Eton master from 1847 to 1872, Cory came in contact with some of the brightest minds of the age. According to the testimony of these men his influence on his pupils was phenomenal. "As a teacher," says Mr Herbert Paul, "he was in a class by himself, differing, not in degree but in kind, from all the other teachers I, at least, have ever known. .....My intellectual debt to him is such that I may be prejudiced; but I cannot imagine that in that character he was ever surpassed[1]." It is wonderful that the man to whom this emphatic testimony is borne, and who numbered among his pupils so many

[1] *Stray Leaves*, 252, 254.

of the most influential men in England, should have remained so long unknown. And yet the appearance of his *Ionica* in 1858 left him almost as obscure as Edward FitzGerald remained after his *Omar*. A second volume under the same title in 1877 met with no better fate. It was not till *Ionica* was reissued with additions in 1891 that he began to draw attention as not merely a teacher but a poet.

There is usually an explanation of phenomena of this sort, and in the case of Cory it is not hard to find. In the first place, on the testimony of his most admiring pupils, his greatness was pre-eminently greatness as a teacher. There was nothing else he did so well, and many things in which he completely failed. His *Guide to Modern English History* (1880–1882) is admittedly not good as a whole: the scholar's pitfall of allusiveness has completely engulfed the author. The case of *Ionica* is rather different, for these poems certainly deserved an attention which they have only now begun to receive. But this neglect too may be explained. Cory was one of the most accomplished of scholars, so accomplished that, according to Mr Herbert Paul, Munro, the editor of Lucretius, pronounced him to have written the best Latin lyrics since the death of Horace. And this scholarship passes into *Ionica*. Some of the best of the pieces are translations from the Greek or from the Latin, and the majority of those which are original are severely classical. But to induce the English public to admire classical purity and severity is the most difficult task the poet can set himself, and he who attempts it must be prepared for disappointment. Landor has never been popular, and Cory, who resembles him but who has less verve and energy, can never be popular either. High as are the merits of many of his poems, it is only a handful, in which a subject essentially modern is treated in the classical style, that can ever command many readers. The best example is *Mimnermus in Church*:—

"You promise heavens free from strife,
Pure truth, and perfect change of will;
But sweet, sweet is this human life,
So sweet, I fain would breathe it still;
Your chilly stars I can forego,
This warm kind world is all I know.

You say there is no substance here,
One great reality above:
Back from that void I shrink in fear,
And child-like hide myself in love:
Show me what angels feel. Till then,
I cling, a mere weak man, to men.

You bid me lift my mean desires
From faltering lips and fitful veins
To sexless souls, ideal quires,
Unwearied voices, wordless strains:
My mind with tender welcome owns
One dear dead friend's remembered tones.

Forsooth the present we must give
To that which cannot pass away;
All beauteous things for which we live
By laws of time and space decay.
But oh, the very reason why
I clasp them, is because they die."

Scholarliness of a less rare sort is shown likewise in the work of Francis Turner Palgrave (1824–1897), and its product is also of a lower kind. Palgrave is more sure of remembrance because of the fine faculty for appreciation shown in his *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* than for any of his original work; and even in his own verse he is best where, as in the poem on Wordsworth, he is intent upon giving expression to his appreciation. His lyrics have seldom sufficient depth of sentiment, and his patriotic poems in *The Visions of England* (1880–1881) lack the fire and energy indispensable to that type of poetry. In this respect he falls below not only Tennyson, but Macaulay, Sydney Dobell, Gerald Massey and several other contemporaries. He also falls far below his junior, William Ernest Henley (1849–1903), a true poet who had the good fortune to be trained under another true poet, T. E. Brown. The long months which Henley passed in an Edinburgh hospital found him a friend in R. L. Stevenson, and also a theme. It is easy to trace the genesis of the poems *In Hospital*, published many years afterwards in the *Book of Verses* (1888), and to explain their grim power, so far as it is explainable by anything besides the native gift of the writer. They are realistic poems, but the realism is no mere transcript of sordid details; all

that the patient saw was taken up into and moulded by a vivid imagination. After his release from hospital Henley settled in London, where he passed through the common experience of daringly original men. The poems entitled *In Hospital* were, he said, rejected by every editor of standing in London. Their subsequent fate proved that the editors were wrong; yet other facts show that there was some excuse for this error. Editors, publishers and newspaper proprietors must live, or at least they naturally think so, and the fact that Henley's editorship proved fatal to three journals is evidence enough that, commercially, the man was dangerous. On the other hand, the success of *The Outlook* must be set to his credit. It was in connexion with his journalistic work that Henley wrote most of his poems as well as the criticisms of literature and of art which appeared in the two series of *Views and Reviews* (1890–1901). The plays with which his name is associated were done in collaboration with Stevenson, and the fact of the collaboration leaves it doubtful whether Henley by himself could have produced a long and complex work. It is only certain that alone he never did it. Besides the *Book of Verses* already named, the volumes entitled *The Song of the Sword* (1892), *Hawthorn and Lavender* (1899) and *For England's Sake* (1900) all contain work of rare quality and all have the unmistakable note of a strong and independent personality. Henley possessed this even in superabundance, and the words of his friends and acquaintances show that it made personal intercourse with him difficult. He who was so sensitive to criticism himself never spared his neighbour. Sometimes, perhaps, the edge of sympathy is thus blunted and his verses robbed of a charm they would otherwise possess; but on the other hand they gain a force and an originality which are exceedingly rare among latter-day poems. To an age somewhat decadent, neurotic, over-finical, Henley brought into literature an untamed virility which might have been more in keeping with the generation of Beowulf.

The pieces of which Henley is the sole author are intense, fervid and powerful, but they are not complex. They are essentially lyrical. They show neither the story-telling power which makes the epic nor the dramatic gift. On the contrary, Henley

seems rather strictly confined within a circle of his own. It had a fairly wide radius, but beyond that radius he could do nothing effectively. Hence in his criticism too he is far more trustworthy where he approves than where he condemns. Condemnation may mean no more than want of sympathy on the part of the critic. Similarly in the poems Henley is himself always the centre of his own universe. Give him a bit of experience like that of the hospital, show him the life of London, stir up his warlike and patriotic fire, and he could write splendidly; but he had no share of that power which enabled Browning to feel with equal intensity what Guido thought, what Caponsacchi thought, and what Pompilia thought. Yet the limitation is really a gain. It is the narrowness that gives strength, as a river flows with greater force through a gorge than in the open plain where its waters have room to spread. Vigour, sincerity and courage are the qualities which give Henley a place among the most remarkable of our later poets.

There could hardly be a sharper contrast than that between Henley and the second Lord Lytton (1831–1891), who is best known in literature by his *nom de plume* of Owen Meredith; and the defiant personality of the younger man, set against the facile receptiveness of the elder, serves usefully to point the difference between the days when originality is rare and the influence of famous names potent, and the days when a new revolt against authority is beginning. While Henley carried independence to excess, Lytton was a sort of literary personification of Echo. He was charged with deliberate plagiarism, and there is more evidence in support of the charge than can usually be adduced in such cases. But a good deal may be explained by the principle of heredity. The younger Lytton inherited from his father a remarkable sensitiveness of mind. As a seismograph will register movements of the earth which are never felt, and record shocks which shock nobody, so Lytton's mind recorded the faintest movements of taste, movements imperceptible to those less finely endowed. There is scarcely a contemporary of note whose mark may not be found somewhere or other in Owen Meredith's verse;

and perhaps the mark which is of most frequent occurrence is that of a man widely different from the poet himself—Robert Browning.

Lytton's *Clytemnestra* (1855), published under the pseudonym which he kept for about two years, was the first of a series of volumes of poetry which, in spite of the interruption occasioned by high office, as Viceroy of India from 1876 to 1880, and as Ambassador in Paris from 1887 till his death, was long enough and varied enough to show the fluency, resourcefulness and wide range of the author. His last work, *Marah*, was published posthumously in 1892.

Over and over again Lytton illustrated that receptiveness which has just been mentioned. *Clytemnestra* appeared a few years after the beginning of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, and it was received with extraordinary enthusiasm, especially at Oxford, where the Pre-Raphaelites were peculiarly strong. The favourite poem of the volume was *The Earl's Return*, and the poet was, after Tennyson, the favourite writer, his most serious rival being Alexander Smith, then at the height of his fame. A little later the taste for the romance in verse is indicated by such works as Mrs Browning's *Aurora Leigh* and Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*; and Lytton quickly responds to it with *Lucile* (1860). In this he was very largely indebted to George Sand. Again, his *Glenaveril* (1885), which is rather a novel in verse than a romance in verse, indicates strikingly the change in taste which had come in the interval. So, too, the *Serbski Pesme* (1861) reminds us of the rising interest in the literature of the East, and *Fables in Song* (1874) are an early instance of the cultivation of folk-lore. In short, Lytton is the best of mirrors, and though he will never rank high in the estimation of the reader who reads solely for the love of poetry, he is invaluable to the student who wishes to see the very image of the time. Sometimes, especially in *Fables in Song* and in *After Paradise; or Legends of Exile* (1887), and occasionally in lyrics scattered here and there through his works, Lytton seems almost to achieve greatness, and the reader is nearly persuaded that here is a true poet, until the shock of some

meretricious touch awakens him, and convinces him that it is only an imitation. For the fault of the elder Lytton was the fault also of the younger. The flaw of an impure taste permeates the work of both. In the elder, who worked mainly in prose, it is very grave; in the younger, who worked in verse, it is fatal.

That interest in the literature of the East, to which reference has just been made, was, of course, no new thing in England. For many generations "the gorgeous East" had exercised upon the mind the fascination of mystery. The establishment of the English power over India increased the interest, and began to fleck the ignorance with knowledge. The imagination of Burke played over it. Sir William Jones was a pioneer in solid Oriental scholarship. The conversation and the habits of returned Anglo-Indians scattered little seeds of information through the country, and their gastronomical tastes spread the knowledge that a curry was hot, and that a "chili," though it sounded cool, was not the proper thing to allay its effect. Max Müller and the philologists advanced the bounds of knowledge enormously. The study of comparative religion opened the eyes of many who had imagined that the West had everything to give and nothing to receive. *Hajji Baba* opened to the Western world the life of Persia. It was also discovered that Persia had treasures of poetry, and that *Lalla Rookh* was neither the last nor a particularly wise word on the poetry of the East. Emerson found inspiration in Hafiz, and Edward FitzGerald's incomparable translation made *Omar Khayyám* one of the classics of the English language. The Indian Mutiny encouraged and even compelled a closer study than ever; for the men who believed that they understood were found to be hopelessly ignorant, and their ignorance had nearly cost England an empire.

It is as the poetic mouthpiece of this spirit that Sir Edwin Arnold (1832–1904) is most interesting. His varied career had much to do with the character of his work. Two early volumes of poetry neither gained nor deserved much attention, though they contain a few good pieces, in particular the prettily fanciful *À ma*

Future, which, by a curious mistake, was printed among the *Final Reliques of Father Prout*. In 1857, however, Arnold became Principal of the Government College of Sanskrit at Poona, and held that office during the exciting days of the Mutiny. On his return to England in 1861 he became a member of the staff of the *Daily Telegraph*, so that when Matthew Arnold was laughing at the young lions, Edwin Arnold was helping to swell their roar.

For more than twenty years Edwin Arnold had written little poetry, and he was scarcely known outside journalistic circles before the publication of his *Light of Asia* in 1879. At once it lifted him into fame; but its success was at least as much due to the rare felicity and timeliness of the subject as to the merits of the poet. The theme was great, and it was new. Arnold said with truth that, a generation before, practically nothing was known in Europe about Buddhism; and even when he wrote knowledge was confined to scholars. Max Müller's translation of the Rig-Veda, completed only five years earlier, was neither attractive nor accessible to the multitude; and the works of other scholars were similarly esoteric. The days of studies of "the soul of a people" were not yet. And so *The Light of Asia* came upon England like a revelation. The fact that the subject was religious pleased the middle class; the fact that the religion was not Christian gave it a welcome breath of novelty. A little earlier, the question might have been raised, Can any good thing come except from Nazareth? But assaults upon the fortresses of orthodoxy had been frequent, and they had at least taught a little caution and a little humility. Perhaps after all there might be something to say for Buddhism. Arnold said it, and on the whole said it well. The misfortune is that he said it neither greatly nor with complete understanding of his subject. Had he been able to rise to "the highth of his great argument," *The Light of Asia* would have been one of the great poems of the world. Nowhere is there grander material for the great imagination; perhaps it is not too much to say that nowhere is there material so grand. It is a *Paradise Regained* in all its first freshness, not threadbare with attrition. But what a difference

between the Miltonic treatment and the Arnoldian! *Paradise Regained*, iron in its strength; *The Light of Asia*, fanciful rather than imaginative, fluent rather than strong, pretty rather than beautiful, plausible rather than convincing. It glides like a rivulet where it should rush like a torrent. Arnold was *felix opportunitate libri*, but what he wrote was only a pleasant, attractive book, not a great one.

The brilliant success of *The Light of Asia* naturally encouraged the author to make further experiments with Eastern themes. *Pearls of the Faith* (1883) was an attempt to do for Mahommedanism something like what the former work proposed to do for Buddhism. *Lotus and Jewel* (1887) contained more Eastern work, and Arnold came to be regarded so much as the poet of the Orient that he seems to have somewhat resented the association, and tried to correct it by *Selected Poems, National and Non-Oriental* (1888). His last work of importance was *The Light of the World* (1891), which may be said to complete his trilogy of the faiths. The temptation to try this subject after *The Light of Asia* is obvious, but the attempt was predestined to failure The difficulties were enormously greater. Even Goethe, with his genius for understanding if he did not feel the religious emotion, could hardly have made fresh a subject hackneyed by millions of sermons. Familiarity was certain to make the audience more critical. Besides, the freshness of Arnold's imagination was gone. The faults of *The Light of Asia* return with increase, the merits have shrunk. In no other of his longer works does Arnold reach the standard he attains there, and rarely does he even approach it. After *The Light of Asia* his best work is to be found in some of the shorter pieces which deal with Eastern life e.g. *The Rajput Nurse*; but a generation that knows Sir Francis Hastings Doyle and Sir Alfred Lyall and Mr Rudyard Kipling will hardly choose Edwin Arnold as laureate of the secular life of the East.

Poetry is in essence grave, and for this reason the wits in verse, parodists, writers of *vers de société*, &c., rank, as a class, after their brethren who have taken a more serious view of their vocation. The best of them may be much better than mediocre

writers of the sober sort, but the best of them can never be great. Besides Praed and the authors of the *Bon Gaultier Ballads* and others who have already been mentioned, there are several writers who still require notice for their wit and grace and epigrammatic skill. First in time, and on the whole in rank, comes Frederick Locker-Lampson (1821–1895), the successor of Praed; but he comes at some distance behind the earlier writer. Praed in his short thirty-seven years of life accomplished as much as Locker-Lampson in exactly double the time, and he showed greater strength of mind, more varied gifts, more abundance and more virility of wit. Locker-Lampson quickly did all that he had the power to do, and his *London Lyrics* (1857), with the subsequent additions to it, contains the sum and substance of his contribution to literature. These lyrics are excellent of their kind, and the best, like the lines *To my Grandmother*, have a touch of seriousness amidst the sport which almost raises them to the higher rank of poetry. Locker-Lampson however could not sustain himself there. One or two pieces, especially the very skilful and pretty love-song, *At her Window*, tempt the reader to believe that he could; but try this by the touchstone of a lyric of true passion, like Burns's "Oh, my love is like the red red rose," or a lyric of tenderness, like Shelley's "One word is too often profaned," and its true character is manifest. It is the utterance, genuine enough, of a spirit which has no wings to soar where such poets sit. And if this be true of Locker-Lampson, it is more emphatically true of Mortimer Collins (1827–1876), who was perhaps more of a novelist than a poet, but who in both capacities suffered seriously from the necessity laid upon him to live by his pen, which led to over-production and the lowering of quality. From this necessity Locker-Lampson was free. He could take time, he need not publish his second-best as well as his best; and so what he has done well is not lost in the wilderness of middling work, as are, unfortunately, the good things of Mortimer Collins.

Regarded as a poet, Charles Stuart Calverley (1831–1884) ranks below either of these two men, and he does not come even within hailing distance of the greater poets; but yet he is far

more safe to be remembered than many of his superiors. The reason is that in his own way he is supreme. Deftness is perhaps the word that best describes his talents, and by reason of that deftness he could turn a parody with what looks like inimitable skill. Perhaps no style was ever more happily taken off by a parodist than Browning's is by Calverley. The satire on snobbery in *Cherry Stones* is delicious, and so is the banter of a certain school of romance in *Forever*. And yet perhaps it only "looks like" inimitable skill, and the judgment which has placed Calverley on the throne of parody may have to be revised. It is significant that those two great parodic satires, *Don Quixote* and *Joseph Andrews*, grew in the making to be much more than their authors meant them to be; and probably the parody which pleases longest will be that which contains most of the poetry of the original, or that which is most riotously humorous. Now although Calverley is flawless in technique, he has very little humour and practically no poetry. So too his translations are technically perfect, but they cannot be compared with such a masterpiece as FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyám*. No one would ever ask whether Calverley was not a greater poet than his original; and, strangely enough, we feel that the paraphrast is true to his original in a deeper sense than the translator who seeks to render word for word as well as thought for thought. Perhaps Calverley's nearest analogue is James Kenneth Stephen (1859–1892), who in *Lapsus Calami* (1891) has sung unstintedly the praise of his senior, and whose own performances rival in the same line even the best of Calverley's *Fly Leaves* (1872). Had Stephen lived it is probable that he would have done something greater than Calverley ever did. He too was a skilful parodist of Browning, but in the fine *Parodist's Apology* he showed a depth of feeling which Calverley never betrayed, if he possessed it; and in the lines on Eton there is affection behind the playfulness of manner. Stephen's early death was a serious loss to literature; but perhaps the same may be said of the accident which partially disabled Calverley at about the same age. R. F. Murray (1863–1894), the St Andrew's poet, is another "inheritor of unfulfilled renown." It is too

much to say, as has been said, that his fragments show a skill not inferior to Calverley's, but they are very good, and in the excellent *After Waterloo* there is a promise of something other and greater. An older jester in verse, Henry Sambrooke Leigh (1837–1883), author of *Carols of Cockayne* (1869), would deserve mention were it but for the sake of the admirable *Only Seven.*

The tone of poetry is certainly lower than it was seventy years ago, and it may be doubted whether there is at present any budding Browning or Tennyson. But to close with the jesters would be to suggest a decline far greater than that which has occurred. There is, not indeed moral elevation, but a vein of genuine poetry in the work of Ernest Dowson (1867–1900), whose *Verses* (1896) excited hopes which were blighted by his early death. Both in his work and in his life Dowson somewhat resembled the Irish poet Mangan. There is still more poetry, and there is a far higher moral tone, in Francis Thompson (1859–1907). The appearance of his *Poems* (1893) seemed to some good judges to mark the advent of a new great poet. Then followed *Sister Songs* (1895), then *New Poems* (1897). If the view expressed in the last chapter about Coventry Patmore be sound, it is probable that his disciple will not permanently hold the high place his admirers claim for him. Though it would be unfair to press the words of a letter written immediately after Patmore's death, in which Thompson calls him "the greatest genius of the century," there can be no doubt that the younger man had for the elder an extreme and almost a fanatical admiration. Fortunately it was the Patmore of the Odes, not of *The Angel in the House*, whom Thompson followed, and he never sank to the puerilities to which the latter model might have tempted him. On the contrary the besetting sin of his style is gorgeousness. This fault is perhaps even more conspicuous in the interesting but over-praised *Essay on Shelley*, which appeared posthumously in *The Dublin Review* in 1908, than in the poems. Thompson's diction is Latinised to excess—occasionally to the very bounds, if not beyond the bounds, of meaning. Sometimes, where he is really inspired, as in the splendid opening of *The Hound*

of Heaven, his majestic English seems the perfect garment of fervid and weighty thought; when inspiration fails the result is deplorable. The other side of this magnificence of diction is contortion of language and over-elaboration of imagery. In the simplest technicalities Thompson occasionally fails surprisingly. He has extraordinary lapses of taste. It is scarcely credible that the same poet who could bear to end a line with the phrase "temerarious if!" wrote also the grand harmonies of *The Hound of Heaven*. That is his most characteristic as it is his best-known poem—most characteristic because it expresses best the deep mystical religion which underlies the greater part of his work, and which unquestionably made him what he was. For he was what many of his predecessors in the Pre-Raphaelite line only seemed to be, a religious poet; perhaps the most deeply imbued with that spirit since Crashaw.

But while *The Hound of Heaven* is the most characteristic, there may be a doubt whether it is the most poetical of Thompson's pieces. Though the simple strain is more rare in him, he is sometimes charming in his poems on children, and perhaps *Daisy* may please the lovers of poetry better even than *The Hound of Heaven*. The echo of Wordsworth is unmistakable; but the poem is no mere copy, and Wordsworth when he is inspired is well worth echoing:—

"She went her unremembering way,
She went, and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone,
And partings yet to be.

She left me marvelling why my soul
Was sad that she was glad;
At all the sadness in the sweet,
The sweetness in the sad.

Still, still I seemed to see her, still
Look up with soft replies,
And take the berries with her hand,
And the love with her lovely eyes.

Nothing begins and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in other's pain,
And perish in our own."

In sharp contrast to Thompson stands John Davidson (1857–1909), the latest of our "poets in their misery dead." Thompson was one of the ascetics who abjure and renounce the world; Davidson was in fierce revolt against a world which he would fain have enjoyed. Thompson was a man of faith, Davidson a man of doubt. Both were unhappy. Even among poets few have had a career so harassed as Davidson's. This advanced sceptic, born into a family where the father was an evangelical minister, was foredoomed to taste of tragedy. The powerful *Ballad of the Making of a Poet*—one of his finest pieces—reads as if it were inspired by personal experience. After a chequered career as a teacher he made his way to London, and threw himself upon literature for a livelihood. He had previously attempted the drama; but his most characteristic work was that which is contained in the two series of *Fleet Street Eclogues* (1893–1896) and *Ballads and Songs* (1894), with the kindred volumes of later date. He reaches his zenith in *Ballads and Songs*. To it, besides the ballad already referred to, belong *A Ballad of a Nun*, *A Ballad of Heaven* and *A Ballad of Hell*, all strong and characteristic pieces. So does *Thirty Bob a Week*, where the influence of Mr Rudyard Kipling is manifest. *In Romney Marsh* and *A Cinque Port* are in the same collection. These pieces pretty nearly measure the range of Davidson's gifts; for in subsequent volumes he added few things entirely new. The two last-named—poems of nature—show him in his rarer mood. The picture of the Cinque Port left by the receding sea is singularly fine:—

"Where argosies have wooed the breeze,
The simple sheep are feeding now;
And near and far across the bar
The ploughman whistles at the plough;
Where once the long waves washed the shore,
Larks from their lowly lodgings soar.

Below the down the stranded town
Hears far away the rollers beat;
About the wall the seabirds call;
The salt wind murmurs through the street;
Forlorn the sea's forsaken bride
Awaits the end that shall betide."

The ballads which have been named illustrate a far more common mood of his mind. They are wrapt in an atmosphere of dusky gloom, and their indubitable force may prove to be a less trustworthy guarantee of permanence than the beauty of the quieter pieces. This mood of stormy passion more and more mastered Davidson in his later years, until in his "testaments" force gives place to violence and passion to fury.

CHAPTER I

AFTER SCOTT

THAT decline in the market-value of poetry, to which attention has been called elsewhere, was partly due to the extraordinary rise and spread of the art of prose fiction in and after the third decade of the nineteenth century. Behind all other reasons for this there lies the fundamental one, that it was just a stage in the development of literature. Prose fiction is the most democratic of all forms of literature, because it makes least demand for education and training and puts the smallest strain upon the intelligence of the reader; and until the masses are educated to a point far above any as yet attempted, and are so far relieved from the burden of physical toil that at the close of the day the mind shall still keep its elasticity, it must remain the staple reading of those among them who read at all. Now the invention of the art of printing made literature potentially democratic; and recent changes of all sorts, political, industrial, social, have tended to render it actually so. In the beginning of the nineteenth century the process was as yet only in its early stages; but it had unmistakably begun.

Two secondary causes operated about the period in question to strengthen and accelerate this process. One of these was the rapid development of periodical literature, and the other was the stimulus given to the imagination, the ambition, and sometimes the cupidity of his younger contemporaries by the wonderful

success of Scott. The earlier and more ambitious periodicals, like *The Edinburgh Review*, had a fairly well-defined field of their own, and took no part in the publication of fiction. But as one magazine after another—*Blackwood's*, *The London*, *Fraser's*, *The Dublin University*, to name the chief representatives of the three kingdoms—sprang into existence, the competition became keener, and the net was spread wider and wider still both for contributors and for readers. The very name "magazine" was suggestive of variety and invited experiment. Even the purely critical *Athenæum* helped to support men like Henry Fothergill Chorley (1808–1872), who was a critic for a livelihood and a novelist by choice. And as the popular appetite grew with what it fed on, every fresh step increased the demand for and the output of fiction. First the short story, then loosely-compacted serials like the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, then novels, more or less close-knit, became the staple article of the magazines. Sometimes the novel itself, divided into parts, stood alone as a serial publication. The case of Dickens is the best known; but the device had been tried before his day; and Pierce Egan's *Life in London*, better known as *Tom and Jerry*, was published in parts like *The Pickwick Papers*, which owes to it a few other hints as well.

The growth of the periodicals was, however, a matter of time, and in the earlier years of the nineteenth century their influence upon the longer works of fiction was comparatively slight. For many a day the orthodox mode of publishing a novel was in the old three-volume form at what would now seem the prohibitive price of a guinea and a half. The great outburst of activity among writers of prose fiction dates from the time of Scott. After he had shown the way, it seemed not so very difficult to follow; just as, a little earlier, it had seemed not so very difficult to imitate his tales in verse. Byron had accomplished the latter feat with such success as to drive his predecessor from the field; though it seems obvious to the reader of the present day that it is not in the line of the metrical romance that Byron is the superior, or even the equal, of Scott. Among the novelists, however, there was no Byron, and the world has been contented to forget the imitations of the Waverley Novels which flowed plentifully from the press in the

third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. On the Continent work which is worthy to be remembered was produced under the inspiration of Scott; but the distance which divides him from his immediate successors in England is greater than that between Shakespeare and the successors of Shakespeare.

There was one remarkable writer who remained uninfluenced by either of these causes. Thomas Love Peacock (1785–1866) was certainly no follower of Scott, and his leisurely writing was unaffected by the rise of the periodicals. Few authors are harder to classify. There is, to begin with, a chronological difficulty, for Peacock is not only "after Scott" but contemporary with Scott. He began writing almost as early as the latter. His *Palmyra* (1806) was published only one year after *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *The Genius of the Thames* (1810) appeared in the same year with *The Lady of the Lake*, and *Headlong Hall* (1816) came only two years later than *Waverley*. On the other hand, the last of Peacock's works was published almost a generation after the death of Scott. Peacock, like Landor, overlaps more than one age of literature. He saw romanticism in its dawn and meridian, and he was still living when the brightness was fading from a later romanticism.

The personal annals of Peacock are short and simple. In his desultory youth he acquired a learning for which he was indebted neither to public school nor to university, but the proof of which is written in many a page of his works. In later days Macaulay and he tried each other in Greek, and the former thought that they were both "strong enough in these matters for gentlemen[1]." Peacock had no permanent employment till the year 1819, when he procured an appointment in the East India House which enabled him to settle down and marry his "Welsh turtle," Jane Gryffydh. The chief event before this had been the formation of a friendship with Shelley. Beginning in 1812, it lasted as long as Shelley lived, and its influence is shown in the fact that Shelley was the one contemporary writer whom Peacock really liked and admired. Even in the case of Shelley it was a critical admiration: in Scythrop, as well as in Mr Cypress, though in far less degree, *surgit amari aliquid.*

[1] Macaulay's *Journal*, December 31, 1851.

The two poems with which (setting aside a few insignificant youthful pieces) Peacock opened his literary career, though long only by comparison, were too long to suit the peculiar bent of his mind. What he did admirably was the short lyric or ballad, commonly a satire or a parody or a drinking song, but now and then profoundly serious and pathetic. The snatches of song, grave and gay, interspersed through his stories are exquisite. The following beautiful lines are an excellent example of his graver manner, and, though included in the later editions of *The Golden Treasury*, they are less widely known than the verses embodied in the prose tales :—

"I dug, beneath the cypress shade,
What well might seem an elfin's grave;
And every pledge in earth I laid,
That erst thy false affection gave.

I pressed them down the sod beneath;
I placed one mossy stone above;
And twined the rose's fading wreath
Around the sepulchre of love.

Frail as thy love, the flowers were dead,
Ere yet the evening sun was set;
But years shall see the cypress spread,
Immutable as my regret."

It is evident that Peacock was Greek after the manner of Landor, not after the manner of Keats. It is evident too that the author of these lines, of the verses on "the slender beech and the sapling oak" and of *Love and Age*, was a lyrist of exquisite touch; while the song of Mr Cypress, *Seamen Three*, *The Pool of the Diving Friar* and *The War-Song of Dinas Vawr* prove him to have been a parodist, humourist and satirist of rare power. But the longer poems, both the two already named and *Rhododaphne* (1818), are interesting chiefly for the light they throw upon Peacock's mind. They show that in spirit he was a poet of the eighteenth century. His classicism was not, indeed, that of Pope. It was based upon independent study, and it was coloured by the work of Gray. There are also ingredients involuntarily taken up from the work of contemporary romanticists; but their incongruous mingling with the personifications suggested by the taste

of the eighteenth century only shows more clearly how far Peacock stood aloof from his contemporaries.

The change from verse to prose was a happy one for Peacock. His first story, *Headlong Hall*, was not good, but *Melincourt* (1817), *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), *Maid Marian* (1822), *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829) and *Crotchet Castle* (1831) proved him to possess a genius not merely original but almost unique. A long silence followed *Crotchet Castle*. When at last it was broken, perhaps the most striking fact which *Gryll Grange* (1861) revealed was that the author seemed to have slept a kind of Rip-Van-Winkle sleep of thirty years, and was hardly at all changed from his former state. There are, it is true, some new subjects of satire, such as spirit-rapping; but in all essentials the temper of the later book is the temper likewise of *Crotchet Castle*.

As a literary artist Peacock stands wholly apart from his contemporaries. He is as nearly as possible free from Scott's influence. It is true that there is a historical element in *Maid Marian* and *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, and the former might seem to have been suggested by *Ivanhoe* were it not for the well-established fact that nearly the whole of it was written before the publication of Scott's novel. Everywhere else it is obvious that Peacock and Scott are opposites; and if ever the lesser man took a hint from the greater, it was only to diverge as widely as possible from his line of treatment. Peacock was nearly everything that Scott was not. He was the satirist of his own generation, and his genius was not historical at all. He was especially interested in literature and literary characters, while of all men of letters Scott was the least absorbed in them. Peacock was fantastic and farcical, Scott was genial and massively sensible. Peacock dealt in "humours" and his method was caricature. Scott loved an occasional oddity and was not averse from a touch of caricature; but his principal characters are human in the deepest sense and he depicts them as they are. Peacock is polished to the last degree—his style, writes one of his editors, is "rather engraved than written." Scott turns off chapter after chapter, novel after novel, with little effort and with no revision. Peacock's brightness and cleverness constantly strike the reader with the pleasant surprise of a sudden

gleam of sunshine from a cloud. Scott rather gives the impression of a day of sunshine too diffused and general to call attention to itself.

There is little plot or story in Peacock's books, and what there is has small significance. They are really fantastic satires, and the story is no more than a thread on which the bits of satire may be strung. In *Melincourt* the "return to nature" and the movement for the abolition of slavery are held up to ridicule, and the Lake poets are caricatured, not very successfully. Though Sir Oran Haut-ton is a thoroughly characteristic specimen of Peacock's mode of satirical portraiture, it is unfortunately spoilt by its excess. *Nightmare Abbey* was meant to "make a stand against the encroachments of black bile," and with that end in view it ridicules Byron (Mr Cypress) and Coleridge (Mr Flosky). Southey too is pilloried as Mr Sackbut, and even Peacock's friend Shelley does not escape; but the portrait of Mr Scythrop is so drawn that, notwithstanding the banter about the complicated loves, Shelley himself enjoyed it. The same satiric spirit pervades *Crotchet Castle* and *Gryll Grange*, but the foundation is broader. The material is not merely the literary, but the intellectual, political, social and religious foibles and follies of the time. In the earlier books Peacock shows cleverness and satiric power in abundance, but by excess of caricature he partly destroys the effect of his own satire. It is in this respect that *The Misfortunes of Elphin* and *Crotchet Castle* and *Gryll Grange* show the greatest advance. Peacock had learnt from experience: he knew the world better than he did in the earlier part of his career. In the earlier books there is no character so rich as that of the "learned and jolly" Dr Folliott, and the satires on the march of mind, the Steam Intellect Society, Brougham, MacCulloch, and all that stands for the progress of the nineteenth century, are flavoured with more oil and less vinegar than we find in the ingredients of the earlier books. Comfortable and prosperous himself, Peacock, satirist as he was, looked with a not unkindly eye upon the follies of the world.

The peculiar point of view, the frequent extravagance of conception and the overwhelming preponderance of the satiric element, combine to set Peacock's novels in a class apart. The mind must be attuned to them or they carry little meaning. The style is

beautiful, the wit is sparkling, there are here and there matchless felicities; but to him who does not possess the key to Peacock's world the felicities are but purple patches. His method is not that of other satirists. Thackeray is satirical too, but his victims walk the streets of London and dwell in the houses which line them. Peacock first removes his characters to some Nightmare Abbey or Crotchet Castle which may possibly be situated in the planet Mars, but which certainly is not to be found beneath the moon. The characters are very human in their appetites and passions, the things which interest them are like the things which interest the inhabitants of earth. Yet somehow both the men and the subjects they discuss have "suffered a sea-change." No character of Peacock's is in the deepest and best sense human, not even Dr Opimian, though he was drawn from the author himself; still less Dr Folliott, witty and clever as the portrait is; least of all such a monstrosity as Sir Oran Haut-ton, though a critic has been found to pronounce even him perfect. Out of foibles and weaknesses alone human character never can be built. The great satirist must go deeper. The grim figures of Tacitus, the Becky Sharp and the Lord Steyne of Thackeray, are men and women; proofs, perhaps, of the agency of the devil, but indubitably denizens of earth. Peacock's characters rather hail from the Limbo of Fools. Not one of those he draws from contemporary literature seems real. Mr Sackbut is generally forgotten. That Peacock understood Byron in a sense is shown by that unsurpassed parody, "There is a fever of the spirit"; but though Mr Cypress could tune Byron's harp, he is too evidently unfit to fill the poet's shoes. Mr Flosky has been praised as a successful Coleridge,—but compare Peacock's caricature with Carlyle's satirical portrait. The truth is that in Peacock the literary quality is superior to the human interest. He has knowledge, wit, humour, technical skill, cleverness in abundance, some genius, he is a keen observer, a caustic critic. What he lacks is humanity[1], just that which is the essence of the greatness of the great humourists—Cervantes, Rabelais, Shakespeare.

[1] The word, of course, is applied to Peacock's literary work, not to his private character.

Of the imitations of Scott some were gross and palpable enough; and in one instance the follower was not content with imitation. *Walladmor* was a forged *Waverley* of German manufacture, which was reviewed and condemned by De Quincey. There were *New Landlord's Tales, or Jedediah in the South* (1825), proclaiming their discipleship by their very title. Horace Smith's *Brambletye House* (1826) is a more widely-known imitation; and it and *Sir John Chiverton* (1826), probably the work of Harrison Ainsworth, drew Scott's own attention and provoked his comments on the difference between himself and his imitators. He compares himself to Captain Bobadil, who trained many to fight nearly as well as himself; but adds that he wrote because his mind was full of what he had read, while they read in order to write. Except in so far as Scott, in the comparison with Captain Bobadil, exaggerates the merits of his imitators and underrates the enormous difference between himself and them, his criticism is admirable. It was especially the historical element in the Waverley Novels that was seized upon for imitation; and the difference between the original and the imitation was just that which Scott states. From boyhood onwards he had been amassing a store of knowledge about the Cavaliers, the Covenanters, the Jacobites, the Roundheads, the Crusaders, not because he meant to make literary capital out of it, but because he was interested; and for what interested him, he possessed one of the most retentive memories with which man was ever gifted. Hence when he, a man over forty, began to write his great series of romances, the knowledge necessary for their construction flowed easily and naturally from a mind already full. There was no laborious consultation of authorities. If he did not recollect a fact, he invented one to suit his purpose; just as, if he failed to call to mind a motto for his chapter, he manufactured it. Scott did not take himself seriously as a historian; nor did he think it part of his contract with his readers to be strictly accurate in matters of fact. He treated lightly the strictures of critics on his inaccuracies, serenely conscious that the same principles of criticism would have led to the condemnation equally of Shakespeare's historical plays; and instead of correcting the errors of which the critics complained,

he pointed out others unnoticed by them. What gives value to the history both of Scott and of Shakespeare is that they have lived imaginatively with their creations and with the real figures among which these are set, so that frequently their errors are more true than the truths of Dryasdust.

This leads to another and even more important difference between the original and the imitations, which is not referred to by Scott. Scott had a wider and more comprehensive knowledge of character than any man since Shakespeare; and to him the figures of history were not mere names in the pages of a book, but as living and real as the men he daily met in the streets of Edinburgh. No man who did not actually *know* them could have drawn his James VI, or Louis XI, or Claverhouse. Whether or not these are just the men who lived under those names in England, or France, or Scotland, they are at any rate men, the beings whom Scott saw emerge from the books and documents he studied. He had, in short, the creative imagination, and all that he read about became without effort real to him. His followers, on the other hand, laboriously pieced their characters together, never feeling their reality at all.

Not unnaturally, the imitators of the Waverley Novels dealt on a different principle with the information which they had with difficulty acquired. Scott could treat lightly that which welled up spontaneously from his full memory; but their information had been won with toil of brain and of eye. Hence we have in the imitators a greater parade of learning, more anxious care, less freedom and flexibility, far less insight into the true meaning of history,—above all, far less power to bring home to the reader the fact that history has been made by men of like passions with ourselves.

Though Scott was not the first to write historical novels, he may fairly be called the father of the historical romance; for it was the Waverley Novels which made it a recognised species in Germany, France and Italy, as well as in England, where nearly all the later masters of romance attempted it. Charles Reade, George Eliot, Thackeray and R. L. Stevenson have all written novels of this description. Only the last however is in the full

sense Scott's successor. No one but he, by the peculiar blend of romance with history and by the atmosphere of nationality in which he wraps his romances, recalls the spirit and manner as well as the general scheme of the author of *Waverley*.

William Harrison Ainsworth (1805–1882) was a follower of Scott who had no real understanding of his master's method. In his best-known works, *The Tower of London* (1840), *Old St Paul's* (1841) and *Windsor Castle* (1843) he is led by Victor Hugo into the error of making a place rather than a person the centre of the story. As Ainsworth has neither Hugo's inspiration nor his force, the result is confusion through the introduction of a mass of irrelevant detail. These novels are wearisome, and the praise they have won has been due rather to a sense that they must be useful in building up the mind of youth, than to any real belief in their merit as novels. Their educational value may, however, be doubted; while it can hardly be questioned that the acts of cruelty and the horrible deaths with which they abound pander to a depraved taste and are likely to vitiate the mind that is not repelled by them.

An unwholesome element of a different sort is noticeable in the other class of Ainsworth's novels, those studies of criminality which we find in *Rookwood* (1834) and in *Jack Sheppard* (1839). In these Ainsworth was following the lead of Bulwer in his *Paul Clifford* and *Eugene Aram*. Ainsworth's contributions to this school of criminal romance, though poor on the whole, are not without passages of merit. The celebrated ride to York, in particular, is, despite its impossibilities and absurdities, a very spirited performance. The two novels were extremely popular, and *Jack Sheppard*, for a short time, even eclipsed its contemporary *Oliver Twist*. But there were vigorous and well-founded criticisms of the morality of works which tended to throw a glamour of romance over such characters as Turpin and Sheppard and Eugene Aram. Probably through these criticisms, Ainsworth was turned once more into the paths of the historical novel. In either department his literary merit is extremely slight, and there is little probability that he will ever again enjoy the vogue which was once his.

Horace Smith (1779–1849), who has been mentioned along

with Ainsworth as one of the two imitators who were remarked upon by Scott himself, really belongs to another department of literature and to an earlier time. It is as the joint-author of *Horace in London* and of *Rejected Addresses*, and as the friend of Shelley, that he is likely to be remembered. He followed up *Brambletye House* with a succession of novels stretching on well towards the close of his own life; but they contain nothing equal in wit or in skill to those early works in which he collaborated with his brother James.

Yet another imitator, whose name has acquired a kind of prescriptive right to mention, was George Payne Rainsford James (1801–1860), who even surpassed his original in productiveness. James is said to have written more than one hundred novels and tales. To read one-tenth part of them would be mere waste of time. His style is conventional and his morals mere sentimentality, while for sameness of situation, and especially of opening, his name has passed into a proverb. Thackeray's burlesque of *Richelieu* (1829) will be remembered long after all that James has written is forgotten.

The patriotism of Scott exercised an influence little, if at all, inferior to that of the historical element, with which in the Waverley Novels it was closely associated; and the value of the works due to it during Scott's own lifetime or in the years immediately following his death, was incomparably greater. Scott was not the only Scottish, any more than he was the only historical, novelist of his time; but as he stood solitary in the historical field in respect of the extent of his knowledge and the sweep of his imagination, so in the sphere of nationality he was alone in his method. He more than once declared that his own national novels were suggested by Miss Edgeworth's Irish tales; but there is a wide difference between the two writers in the principle upon which they work as well as in genius. Miss Edgeworth is a realist, Scott is romantic. Now though Scott was the chief source of inspiration, it was Miss Edgeworth's method rather than his which was followed by the other writers on Scottish life; and this is in the main true also of the Irish school which presently came into existence. There is little affinity to *Waverley* even in Lockhart's

Scottish story, *Adam Blair* (1822). The scene is laid in Scotland, but the theme of the story is one of the elemental passions of humanity, and the action might take place wherever human beings are found. His *Valerius* (1821) has been called a kind of Roman *Old Mortality*[1], but the romantic glamour is wanting. John Wilson's *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life* (1822) and his *Trials of Margaret Lindsay* (1823) stand in a class by themselves, graceful and delicate, but somewhat too sentimental. Susan Ferrier (1782–1854), the friend as well as the contemporary of Scott, was the humourist of the society she saw around her, a kind of Scottish Miss Austen, though less fine and less powerful. Her business was with the class to which her own friends and associates belonged, the Scottish gentry; and outside its limits she could do little. D. M. Moir (1798–1851), the "Delta" of *Blackwood*, in his solitary work of fiction, *Mansie Wauch* (1828), contents himself with writing the biography of a Dalkeith tailor. John Galt (1779–1839) fulfils the same function as Miss Ferrier for a lower stratum of society. There is very little story and there is no romance in his excellent pictures of Scottish life. Within his narrower range he is as true as Scott himself, and his eye is almost as keen; but the title of one of his books is descriptive of his work—he is the annalist of the parish. His portrait in *The Entail* (1823) of Claud Walkinshaw, Laird "Grippy," is perfect, and the slighter sketch of his faithful and ill-requited "bairnswoman" Maudge, is hardly less admirable, while the garrulous "leddy" is equal to any character of that species that Scott himself has drawn. But the whole novel moves as on an axis round the lands of Kittlestonheugh. Scott's Morton of Milnwood is even meaner than Grippy, his Cuddie Headrigg is certainly not more faithful than Maudge; but the one in spite of himself, and the other by reason of his fidelity, become parts of the great controversy between Episcopalian and Covenanter. And this is not an exceptional case in Scott. However mean or commonplace or unromantic his characters are in themselves, they acquire a new significance from their setting. Bailie Macwheeble is woven into the romantic drama of Highlands and Lowlands; Andrew

[1] Herford's *Age of Wordsworth*, 127.

Fairservice, self-seeker and money-grubber, gets whirled away on an adventurous ride; the sober Glasgow merchant, Bailie Nicol Jarvie, is carried into the midst of an outlawed Highland clan, and takes an involuntary share of the risk in an armed conflict between the clansmen and the soldiers of the Government; Bryce Snailsfoot, pedlar just like Grippy, comes into contact with such romantic personages as a pirate and a Norse prophetess.

No doubt the Scottish writers contemporary with and subsequent to Scott adopted the method of Miss Edgeworth, rather than that of their great countryman, of necessity and not of choice. Few could successfully fill the large canvas of the Waverley Novels. Galt's attempt in *Ringan Gilhaize* (1823) was a complete failure. The Irish writers however set before themselves the more ambitious aim of doing for Ireland what Scott had done for Scotland; but they had neither the educational equipment nor the native gifts necessary to complete success. The deficiency in the former respect of the greatest of them, William Carleton, may be measured by the trick played upon him by his countryman, the poet Denis Florence McCarthy. During Carlyle's visit to Ireland in 1847, Carleton was present with a number of the Young Ireland party at a breakfast in honour of Carlyle, when the conversation ran upon the poetry of Shelley, which Carlyle and Carleton joined in depreciating. So contemptuous was the opinion held of Carleton's knowledge of English literature that McCarthy gravely asked him if he would disparage Shelley's masterpiece, *Sartor Resartus*; and it needed the laugh which followed to put Carleton sufficiently on his guard to retort that it would be well for Shelley if he could write a book like *Sartor Resartus*[1]. Not on such foundations were the historical romances of Scott built, nor could any man so inadequately equipped have taken Scott's broad view of public affairs and of the relation of class to class. Naturally therefore it is a very dwarfed and attenuated *Waverley* that we get from the pens of the Irish followers of Scott. In the wider aspects of their work they were, in spite of themselves, more like their countrywoman, Miss Edgeworth. But they had energy and verve, and they often

[1] O'Donoghue's *Life of William Carleton*, ii. 118.

contrived to give to their tales much of the breezy freshness of Scott's novels.

William Carleton (1794–1869) would have won the gratitude of all lovers of good literature if he had left nothing but his *Autobiography*. Unfinished as it is, this "marvellous human document" is incomparably the most interesting and instructive of all the books bearing upon the Celtic revival. In explaining Carleton himself, it throws a flood of light upon all the most intensely Irish writers as well, and not least upon Griffin and Banim, whose names Carleton associates with his own as "the only three names which Ireland can point to with pride[1]." The racial gifts and defects, the sources from which all drew, the spirit in which they worked, the influences which made them what they were, are all shown by Carleton with unrivalled vividness. If it were necessary to choose only one book from which to form a conception of Ireland and the Irish in the early part of the nineteenth century, it would probably be wise to fix upon Carleton's *Autobiography*. It is full of prejudices and perversities; but if it were free from them it would be less truly Irish than it is; and its overflowing life more than atones for all its faults. In the discovery and the publication of this fascinating volume, Carleton's biographer, Mr D. J. O'Donoghue, has conferred upon literature a boon of rare value.

"There never was any man of letters," says Carleton, "who had an opportunity of knowing and describing the manners of the Irish people so thoroughly as I had[2]"; and every reader of the *Autobiography* must be satisfied of the truth of the statement. He was himself a peasant, and his pictures of the life of the peasantry are drawn either directly from his own experience or from that of the men among whom he lived. For the production of these pictures he had not only extraordinary gifts, but very great external advantages. Uneducated as his parents were, Carleton justly describes them as "highly and singularly gifted." His father "possessed a memory not merely great or surprising, but absolutely astonishing." He could repeat by heart nearly the whole of the Old and New Testaments, and "as a narrator of

[1] O'Donoghue's *Carleton*, ii. 291. [2] *ibid.* i. 148.

old tales, legends and historical anecdotes he was unrivalled, and his stock of them inexhaustible"; so much so that Carleton hardly ever afterwards heard any Irish tradition, legend or usage, with which he was not already familiar. His mother "possessed the sweetest and most exquisite of human voices," was especially celebrated for her wonderful power of raising the "keen," and sang a large number of old Irish songs.

The youngest of a large family which crowded the small Irish cabin[1], William Carleton had for birthright only his share of the poverty of all. He was however, from the first, a remarkable boy, and was early singled out to be educated and to become a priest. The result of his first day in school certainly justified the selection; for in that one day he mastered the alphabet and got as far as b-a-g, *bag*. The teacher was Pat Frayne, who afterwards sat for his portrait as Mat Kavanagh in *The Hedge School*. But the sequel illustrates the difficulties which beset the education of the Irish peasantry in those days. Finding only three scholars, Frayne, after that single day, left the neighbourhood; and for years afterwards the boy Carleton was driven from pillar to post, picking up scraps of education where and how he could. At one time he set out to be himself the "poor scholar" whom he has touchingly depicted in one of the most beautiful of the *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*; but, moved partly by an ominous dream, and probably still more by the natural heaviness of heart at parting from all he held dear, he turned back upon the way.

There is evidence in the *Autobiography* that Carleton would willingly have gone on living an easy life with the reputation of "a scholar," dressing like a rustic dandy, performing athletic feats and attending wakes and dances. But his eldest brother Michael's reproaches and jeers drove him to apprentice himself to a stone-cutter—an engagement which he immediately broke—and then to wander forth into the world, after first residing with a sister until her husband made it plain that he was not disposed to support Carleton indefinitely. He became a tutor in the family of a farmer, and after various changes and adventures made his

[1] Fourteen children were born, but six were dead before the birth of William.

way ultimately to Dublin, where he became clerk to the Sunday School Society, married, was dismissed, reinstated, dismissed again, and finally became a professional, but always a needy, man of letters. Carleton, in fact, was incapable of managing his own affairs, and even the Crown pension of £200 a year, which was bestowed upon him in 1848, failed to relieve him from pecuniary embarrassments. Though he was never paid in accordance with the literary merit of his work, the sums he received ought, with good management, and with the help of his pension, to have kept him in comfort and free from the incubus of debt.

Carleton came of a Romish family; and the fact that he became clerk to a Protestant society indicates a change of religion. In truth, sometimes from conviction, sometimes, it is to be feared, under the pressure of his needs, Carleton was in one part of his life or another nearly everything that an Irishman could be. He was by a trick made a Ribbonman before he had ceased to be a schoolboy. He has written for landlord and for tenant, for Papist and for Orangeman. This fact has diminished his popularity among his countrymen, but it makes him all the more interesting. His change of religion was the outcome of that remarkable personal experience narrated in *The Pilgrimage to Lough Derg*, of which, with his customary naive self-conceit, but not wholly without reason, Carleton speaks as "probably one of the most extraordinary productions that ever appeared in any literature[1]." It is so by reason of its singular vividness and truth: the author declares that there is "not even an exaggeration of any kind" in the narrative, and that Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, who made the pilgrimage long afterwards, had assured him that he was surprised by its truth and accuracy.

The Pilgrimage to Lough Derg, which appeared in *The Christian Examiner* in 1828, marks Carleton's entrance into literature. For several years he wrote for *The Examiner* and for *The National Magazine*, and from 1833 onwards his name is prominent as a contributor to *The Dublin University Magazine*. Meanwhile, a number of his papers had been gathered into volumes. The first was his *Father Butler* and *The Lough Derg Pilgrim* (1829).

[1] O'Donoghue's *Carleton*, i. 101.

This was followed by *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1830), to which a second series was added three years later. Carleton justly calls it his greatest work. The *Tales of Ireland* (1834) stand on a far lower level. Of Carleton's longer works, among the best are *Fardorougha the Miser*, which first appeared in *The Dublin University Magazine* in 1837–1838, *Valentine McClutchy* (1845), *The Black Prophet* (1847) and *The Emigrants of Ahadarra* (1847). There is good work also in *Parra Sastha, or the History of Paddy Go-easy and his wife Nancy* (1845) and in *The Tithe Proctor* (1849); but these roused much feeling against Carleton in his native country. The satire on Irish shiftlessness in the former was resented; and the fact that in the latter the writer took the side of the minority against the majority gave still deeper offence.

But while Carleton, not unnaturally, was willing enough to give expression to the views of the party of his adoption, the genuine and great grievances and sufferings of the other party never passed from his mind. In his old age he wrote that within his own memory, under the penal laws, "there was nothing in existence for the Catholics for the worship of God except the mere altar, covered with a little open roof to protect the priest from rain, which it was incapable of doing"; and he could recollect a time when there was "no law *against* an Orangeman, and no law *for* a Papist." His *Valentine McClutchy* is a story of the dominance of Orangeism and the oppression of the land-laws, the germ of which was an Orange outrage perpetrated in his father's house when Carleton was a mere boy; and his *Black Prophet* is an appalling picture of sufferings from famine. It was founded upon a forgotten famine of Carleton's youth; but, appearing as it did when the great famine was raging, it was believed to be a picture of what was then taking place.

It is Carleton's misfortune that, among his novels, the one which is best known is the commonplace *Willy Reilly* (1855). Before that was published he had passed his youth. In his early novels, and in the *Traits and Stories*, he had used the best of the materials of his own experience. He had either to repeat himself, or to wander into unfamiliar ground; and the

moment he does so he becomes uninteresting. It is by the *Traits and Stories* that his name must live. In these and in the best of his novels the characters, both male and female, are well drawn and the story is vivid. But in all his longer works Carleton is irregular; something weak and flat is constantly intruding to spoil what is powerful, pathetic or lively. The *Traits and Stories* are free from such irregularities. The different tales, it is true, vary widely in quality; but when Carleton has a good theme, and his imagination is fired with it, there is neither pause nor decline. In literary quality the pathetic stories, such as *The Poor Scholar* and *Tubber Derg*, are the best; but the humorous pictures of rough Irish life are excellent too. Their fault is exaggeration. There is rather more than enough of extravagant humour and burlesque; but the pictures of faction fights, weddings and wakes, and the characters of the hedge schoolmaster and his scholars, the smuggler, the Whiteboy, the pig-driver, and the innumerable oddities of Irish life, are all the more valuable because, as a countryman of their creator's pointed out in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1848, they are pictures of a class who were even then passing away "from the records of history, and from the memory of man for ever[1]."

The two men whose names Carleton associates with his own were both cut off in their prime, and the work of Griffin especially must be regarded rather as the promise of what he might have done than as the ripe fruit of his intellect.

John Banim (1798–1842) collaborated with his elder brother Michael (1796–1874) in their most famous and best work, the *Tales by the O'Hara Family* (1825–1827), and he wrote besides one or two tragedies and a good deal of verse. All the Irish writers of the time were more or less poets as well as writers of prose. There is an unmistakable strain of poetry in Carleton's prose, and, though he wrote very little verse that is worthy of remembrance, his *Sir Turlough* deserves a high place among modern ballads. On the poetic side Griffin was the most highly gifted of the three. He has left a considerable body of good poems, and among them are a few which approach excellence.

[1] Quoted in O'Donoghue's *Carleton*, i. 150.

Eileen Aroon is a piece of rare delicacy, and *The Wake of the Absent* is at once touching and beautiful. Banim never rises to this level, and most of his verse is rough and faulty.

The story of the life of John Banim is rendered beautiful by the devotion of the elder brother and by the heroic fortitude of the younger under intense physical suffering, his warm family affections and his generous helpfulness to countrymen more needy than himself. Michael seems to have been almost, if not quite, as well endowed for literature as John; but it was the latter who went to London, where, after some attempts, not wholly unsuccessful, at the drama, he settled down as a writer of Irish tales; and it was only through his encouragement that the elder brother became a writer too. The deliberate purpose of the Banims was to do for Ireland what Scott had done for Scotland; and though they were younger men than Carleton they had the advantage of anticipating him in the date of their writings. They had sufficient tact and insight to be aware that no mere collection of comic tales, however amusing, or of reckless adventures, however exciting, would serve their purpose. The Irish have been singularly unfortunate in some of their literary representatives. By Lever and by Lover they are depicted simply as a people of riotous mirth. The Banims show the tears as well as the laughter, the melancholy which is no less a trait of the Celt than mirth, while it unquestionably has deeper roots. But the Banims had scarcely enough of the artistic gift, and they failed to fuse their materials. Too often we find a grave chapter followed by a humorous one for no better reason than that the writer feels it necessary to illustrate the other side of character. Too often the garrulity of some old peasant woman retards the progress of the story at a critical point, when the reader has as little patience with her as the actors in the tale. Shakespeare finds room for Mrs Quickly in his *Henry IV*, but not between Hotspur and Prince Hal on the field of Shrewsbury. Scott brings in Mause Headrigg with effect at Drumclog; but her utterances are crisp and vigorous and short, and she is a component part of the scene, not an excrescence. This higher skill the Banims did not possess. It was not wholly the fault of the writer that *The Croppy* (by

Michael Banim), a tale of the rebellion of 1798, fell so far short of Scott's story of the '45. The absence of romantic glamour is partly due to the fact that the events were too recent, but still more to the fact that the Irish rising was, on the whole, a movement of the peasantry alone, without their natural leaders. The Highland host without Vich Ian Vohr and his fellow-chieftains would have been sordid enough. This defect of *The Croppy* is rather inherent in the subject than due to Banim's treatment of it; but he is certainly responsible for the lack of concentration which the story shows. The same writer's earlier tale however, *Crohoore of the Bill-hook* is vigorously written, and his brother's story, *The Nowlans*, is powerful as well as tragic.

The other name which Carleton condescended to associate with his own was that of Gerald Griffin (1803–1840), the friend of Banim. Griffin was a man of sensitive and even morbid conscience. He established his footing in the world of letters after a hard struggle, in the course of which he proved himself to possess no ordinary capacity for delineating passion. Then he was seized with scruples. He thought such delineations harmful; and when he had once convinced himself of this no persuasion could induce him to continue. He abandoned literature and devoted himself to the work of a charitable brotherhood of the Romish Church; and in that work he contracted the disease which carried him off at the early age of thirty-seven.

The most noteworthy product of Griffin's brief literary career is *The Collegians* (1829), widely known as *The Colleen Bawn*, under which title it was dramatised by Dion Boucicault. In this powerful tragedy the influence of Scott is manifest. But though a work of high promise it is still immature; and we may reasonably suppose that at thirty-seven Griffin could have far surpassed the work of the young man of twenty-six. The defect of *The Collegians* is precisely that which mars also the *Tales by the O'Hara Family*. The anecdotes, the references to the customs of the country, all that gives local colour, delay the progress of the story rather than further it. In many instances the specially Irish scenes are brought in by violence where they have no business to be—for example, the chatter of the barber while he is cutting the hair of

Hardress Cregan. At the age at which Griffin wrote *The Collegians*, it was hardly possible for him to have a profound knowledge of character, and sometimes, as in the case of the milk-and-water Kyrle Daly, he fails completely in delineation. But as a rule his characters, though they are not deep studies, give the impression of reality; and here too a wider experience would have taught him much. His method was right, his narrative good; only time and practice were needed to raise him to excellence.

Carleton, like Mangan, lived and wrote in the country where he was born; but Ireland had no such literary centre as, in those days, Scotland had in Edinburgh, and no such organ as *The Edinburgh Review* or *Blackwood's Magazine*. The establishment of *The Dublin University Magazine* in 1833 in some degree supplied the latter want; and *The Nation* newspaper, founded in 1842, had an influence simply incalculable in the development of national spirit. It is notorious that to the latter is due a whole literature in verse, of which it may be said that, though the panegyrists of Celticism have greatly exaggerated its merits as poetry, they could not exaggerate its practical importance. Meanwhile however there had been a considerable leakage of literary talent to the wealthier sister-island and the more attractive centre of London. Darley and Banim were there, and there Gerald Griffin struggled to establish himself. Thither too ultimately drifted William Maginn (1793–1842), who was for a time a centre of attraction to other Irishmen. His career, though far from creditable, is interesting and instructive. In early years he followed his father's profession of schoolmaster at Cork, and while thus engaged he established a connexion with *Blackwood's Magazine*, surprising the Edinburgh men by the extraordinary vividness with which he realised the life and the society which at that time he had never seen. His learning, his versatility and his exuberant wit made him a contributor inferior in importance only to Wilson and Lockhart. But although he had many engaging qualities Maginn was not a man to be relied upon; and after many years of friendly relations Blackwood and he became estranged. Meanwhile Maginn had moved to London, where he was for a time on

terms of intimacy with Thackeray, then a young man seeking to establish himself in the world of journalism. The best known and probably the most life-like portrait of the Bohemian Doctor is the satirist's Captain Shandon. But if Thackeray saw his weaknesses he looked upon them with a kindly eye, and is said to have helped him in his difficulties with a loan of £500—which, of course, was never repaid.

Maginn was unquestionably a man of brilliant gifts, but he had no backbone of character. His course almost from the start was downward. As early as 1826 Lockhart writes of him: "I never saw a man grow more inferior to himself in a short time than he has to the O'Doherty[1] of former days. Newspaper scribbling has totally destroyed a style that was always too light and hasty. There is now little whalebone indeed remaining[2]." Nevertheless, Maginn had still a great reputation, and whenever there was a new enterprise on foot he seems to have been thought of either as editor or as contributor. He was engaged on John Murray's unsuccessful newspaper, *The Representative*; but "he was better at borrowing money than at writing articles[3]."

The most important event in Maginn's literary life was the establishment, in conjunction with his friend Hugh Fraser, of the celebrated *Fraser's Magazine* (1830), the publication of which was entrusted to James Fraser because he happened to bear the same surname as Maginn's friend. Maginn used his acquaintance with the *Blackwood* staff, his other literary connexions and his own reputation to draw around the new magazine a band of contributors more brilliant even than that which supported "Maga." Among the older writers who lent their aid were Coleridge and Southey; among Maginn's own contemporaries were Lockhart, Carlyle and Edward Irving; among the younger men was Thackeray. No English periodical ever possessed a more brilliant staff than *Fraser* in its early days.

One of the older writers who, as a member of the *Fraser* group, may be briefly noticed here, was Theodore Hook (1788–

[1] Maginn's *nom de plume* in *Blackwood*.
[2] Mrs Oliphant's *Blackwood*, i. 242.
[3] Smiles's *John Murray*, ii. 209.

1841). He was already somewhat past his prime. The brilliancy of his conversation, his extraordinary gift for extempore verse and his exhaustless resources for entertainment made him in his youth a favourite in society. Through his powerful acquaintances he procured the post of Accountant-General of the Mauritius; but he returned with a cloud upon his character. Large sums of money which were under his charge had disappeared, and he was prosecuted for embezzlement. The matter has never been satisfactorily cleared up; but it seems probable that Hook was culpably careless rather than criminally guilty. He became a political journalist, editing and largely writing the *John Bull*. To this journal Maginn contributed, and so the connexion between him and Hook began.

Hook's novels belong to the later stage of his career. The first part of his *Sayings and Doings* appeared in 1824, *Maxwell*, the most carefully framed of them all, in 1830. *Gilbert Gurney* (1836) has a special interest because it is to a considerable extent autobiographical. But not one of Hook's novels strikes the modern reader as worthy of the author's unquestionable gifts. *Jack Brag* (1837), for example, is a somewhat coarse story of the adventures and misadventures of a vulgar toady and pretender to gentility. He is the son of a candle-maker, and he hears with dismay any chance word that may possibly allude to his father's trade, which is carried on by his mother. Matter like this, which might be tolerable enough for a chapter or two, becomes nauseous in the extreme when it is spread over a whole novel. Such as it is, moreover, Hook treats it with far less cleverness and resource than he frequently expended on a hoax, or in extemporising verses for the entertainment of a dinner party. The interest of his novels now is rather extrinsic than intrinsic. Dickens borrowed one or two notable incidents and characters. Hook's Kekewich is the prototype of Jingle, and more than a hint for the breach of promise case in *Pickwick* is to be found in the history of Mrs Fuggleston. It may be remarked in passing that there is something regal in Dickens's "conveyances." "Bill Stumps, his mark," is taken unblushingly from *The Antiquary*. And the confidence of Dickens has been justified by the fact that

the fun and humour have passed to his credit. The far more masterly scene in Scott is rarely referred to, and the name Aiken Drum probably carries no meaning to nine out of ten of those who are delighted with Bill Stumps.

Maginn is now *magni nominis umbra*. Destitute of the self-control which devotion to a great aim demands, writing always in a hurry and often in the midst of dissipations, he squandered on ephemeral journalism intellectual powers and literary gifts of a rare kind. He was a man of varied learning; he had the capacity to be a great critic, and in occasional articles he did excellent critical work; he was an admirable story-teller, and had he possessed the gifts of concentration and perseverance he might have been a great novelist. But after a life of forty-nine years all these talents produce only a few volumes of fugitive writings, for the greater part too thin and ephemeral to be worth reading now.

Maginn however, not only by his own writings, but by the company he gathered round him, communicated a noticeable Irish flavour to *Fraser's Magazine*. Among his countrymen who wrote for it were Francis Mahony (1804–1866) and Crofton Croker, the former of whom is best known by his *nom de plume* of Father Prout. The famous *Reliques* were contributions to *Fraser's Magazine*; and it is humiliating to human taste and to the human intellect to remember that while *Sartor Resartus* came near bringing ruin upon the magazine, the papers of Mahony were among its most powerful supports. To skim the pages of Maginn is melancholy work, but to turn over those of Father Prout is more melancholy still. Mahony's wit has long been stale, and he deserves a passing mention not so much for his native merits as because he was once a conspicuous figure in a remarkable literary band. This eclipse is due less to the fault of the man than to the species of literature which he cultivated. The harlequin is permanent in letters as on the stage, but each age must produce its own. A new generation will no more accept the Mahony or the Douglas Jerrold of the old than it would laugh at the ghost of Grimaldi at its Christmas pantomime.

The connexion of T. Crofton Croker (1798–1854) with *Fraser* was less intimate, and he is now best remembered not as an

original writer but as a collector. His *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825) and his *Legends of the Lakes* (1829) are admirable of their kind; but in the composition of them he received a good deal of help, from Maginn among others.

There remain two Irishmen who, though they were caricaturists rather than artists, have done more than all the rest to create the Irishman of literature. These were Samuel Lover (1797–1868) and Charles Lever (1806–1872). They have some affinities; but whereas the caricature of the Irish nature in Lever is relieved and varied by the rapid rush of events, in Lover it is the staple, and the reader becomes unpleasantly conscious of its essential falsity and hollowness. Like many of his countrymen, Lover was remarkable for his versatility; and like not a few of them he lowered the quality of his work by the lack of concentration which that versatility indicated. He was a painter as well as an author, he wrote verse as well as prose, dramas as well as novels. He composed the music for his own songs, and sang them too with excellent effect. He also tried the stage in *Rory O'More*, dramatised from his own novel of that title, but speedily gave it up.

Lover's talents were superficial, though brilliant. Unlike Maginn, he made the most of his life and of his powers, working hard in his cheery way. But his Irish stories, *Rory O'More* (1837) and *Handy Andy* (1842), show how weary a thing is "gaiety without eclipse." The latter, which is probably his best known book, is altogether formless and exceedingly tedious. The characters are worthless, and we feel that nature and truth are not in it. Lover's supreme gift was the gift of comic verse. His serious poems are poor; but in humorous songs, such as the well-known *Widow Machree*, he is equal to the best.

This gift of humorous verse is one of the points of resemblance between Lover and Lever; and the latter's *Widow Malone* is worthy of a place by the side of Lover's *Widow Machree*. But in all other respects Lever is much superior. Carleton and Banim have undoubtedly drawn the Celt more accurately than Lever; but no one else has made him so popular. There are multitudes of

Englishmen whose conception of Irish life and of the Irish character is drawn from Lever, and who, when they think of the Irishman, do so through the medium of Lever's stories. And yet it is plain that the characters are little better than farcical caricatures, and that Lever only skims the surface of Irish life. His superficiality may have been partly due to the fact that by blood he was more English than Irish. His father migrated from Manchester to Ireland, and his mother too was of a family originally English.

Lever was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where in 1831 he took his degree of bachelor of medicine; but he never took kindly to the medical profession, and was glad to shake it off for the profession of letters, and for the post of British Consul, first at Spezzia and then at Trieste, where he died. In 1836 he had become a contributor to *The Dublin University Magazine*, and from 1842 to 1845 he edited it. Another contributor to the magazine in those days was Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814–1873), who towards the close of his life became its proprietor and editor. But Le Fanu's early stories were little noticed, and it was not till nearly a generation later that he won his modest measure of success as a novelist. At this time he was known chiefly for his Irish ballads, some of which were sung by Lover, and are not infrequently attributed to the singer.

To those early years belong what have certainly been Lever's most popular novels, *Harry Lorrequer* (1839), *Charles O'Malley* (1841), *Jack Hinton* (1843) and *Tom Burke of Ours* (1844). In later days Lever's books showed an advance in literary skill, and, though he was never a careful writer, he worked in a less reckless style than he did in the beginning of his career. For these reasons some, himself among the number, have preferred certain of his later stories, such as *Tony Butler* (1865) and *Sir Brook Fossbrooke* (1866). But the superior popularity of the early tales, and especially of *Charles O'Malley*, seems to be well deserved. No degree of care or labour could ever have made Lever a great novelist. His conception of character was crude and shallow, and he had little power of construction. Even in his later days the change is, after all, only superficial. "You ask

me how I write," he says to Blackwood as late as 1863; "my reply is, just as I live—from hand to mouth[1]." And the reply is an exact statement of the truth, and an explanation at once of Lever's merits and of his defects. Not only did he write rapidly, but he instantly forgot what he had written. His letters from Spezzia and Trieste to the Blackwoods are full of lamentations over 'copy' which he fears has gone astray. It would not be difficult to write something new, but to write what would fit in to the part before and the part after—*hic labor, hoc opus est.* In particular, he never could wind up satisfactorily. The characters of a book, he says, "are like the tiresome people who keep you wishing them good-night till you wish them at the devil. They won't go—the step of the hall-door would seem to have bird-lime on it[2]." Naturally therefore when the influence of the time induced Lever to attempt analysis the result was unsatisfactory. His charm goes as he becomes more consciously literary, and his own preference for these later stories seems to be rather the attempt at self-persuasion of a man who suspects that his day is over than a genuine opinion.

There is however sound self-criticism in the opinion Lever expresses of the series of miscellaneous papers entitled *Cornelius O'Dowd upon Men, Women, and other Things* (1864–1865). "They are," he says, "the sort of things I can do best. I have seen a great deal of life, and have a tolerably good memory for strange and out-of-the-way people, and I am sure such sketches are far more my 'speciality' than story-writing[3]." Just for this reason the early stories, reckless and planless, are the best. The qualities which give Lever's works their value are the lively narrative, the humour and the "rollick." He stands supreme for unfailing flow of spirits. In the early tales these qualities are unrestrained, and neither facts, nor character, nor plot is allowed to interfere with them. Harry Lorrequer and Charles O'Malley go where the whim of the author decides, and do whatever most tends to entertainment. Lever naturally took first the cream of that experience of life and knowledge of strange characters of

[1] *Blackwood and his Sons*, iii. 226.

[2] Downey's *Charles Lever*, ii. 75–76.

[3] *ibid.* ii. 14.

which he speaks. Many of the most eccentric characters and not a few of the most surprising adventures were real. Major Monsoon was an officer in the British army, who by a legal deed, for the sum of four napoleons, assigned to Lever the right to make what use he pleased of himself and his adventures, or what he described as his adventures.

Charles O'Malley is a story not merely of Irish life, but of the great struggle which was convulsing Europe during Lever's childhood; and when Thackeray parodied Lever in *Phil Fogarty*, the fighting element was one of the principal points upon which he directed his good-natured satire. Lever thus belongs not only to the Irish group, but to the class of military novelists, whom the stir and excitement, the glory and the sufferings of the Napoleonic wars called into existence. He was not the earliest of the class, but he was the best, because he was most successful in welding fiction with history, or perhaps rather because he firmly resolved to subordinate history to fiction; for the historical element in Lever's lively tales is very slight indeed. Among the other novelists of the war was Lever's countryman and friend, William Hamilton Maxwell (1792–1850), whose work helped to turn the younger man's attention to the war. Maxwell had been through the Peninsular campaigns and had been present at the battle of Waterloo; and his most notable productions, *Stories of Waterloo* (1834) and *The Bivouac, or, Stories of the Peninsular War* (1837), deal with what he had himself witnessed. For that reason they are interesting; but they are too crude and inartistic to have much value as literature.

Another writer on military subjects who, like Maxwell, adopted the autobiographic process, was George Robert Gleig (1796–1888), whose tale *The Subaltern* (1826) was exceedingly popular and still remains both readable and instructive. It was warmly praised by Wellington; and the correspondence started between the author and the Duke on the proposed dedication of *The Subaltern* led ultimately to the production of Gleig's *Life of Wellington*. These are the only items of Gleig's writing that still retain any interest; but his pen was extremely prolific, and Lockhart in 1828 writes of him as having "some sermons, some novels, and some histories

all at press in London at this moment[1]," besides an unknown amount in Edinburgh. Slightly later Thomas Hamilton (1789–1842), brother of the philosopher, Sir William Hamilton, followed in the wake of Gleig with *Cyril Thornton* (1827), in which he carries his hero through the same struggle. The narrative is good and vigorous, but there is not much character-drawing, and very little plot. The conditions of the subject encouraged a story of the Defoe type rather than a modern novel.

Considerably later in date, but still occupied with the same themes, was James Grant (1822–1887). While Maxwell and Gleig worked upon personal experience, Grant told his tales of the same great conflict at second hand. His father had served in the Peninsula, and the novelist himself at one time held a commission. *The Romance of War* (1845) is the best, as it is also the best known of his numerous productions. Grant paid more attention to historical accuracy than his predecessors. While the character and adventures of his hero are fictitious, *The Romance of War* is an attempt to follow faithfully the fortunes of the 92nd Highlanders through the Peninsula; and herein lies at once its interest and its artistic defect. The story is sacrificed to the exigencies of fact, and the result is a work which is neither a history nor a novel.

As the Peninsular battles inspired one group of writers, so the career of Nelson and the glories of the British navy inspired another; and if Lever is the laureate of the Irish soldier, Frederick Marryat (1792–1848) is the laureate of the British sailor. The nautical novel differs somewhat widely from the stories founded upon campaigns on land. In the case of the latter we sometimes see the influence of Defoe, and sometimes that of Scott; but the nautical novelists are all of the school of Smollett: *Roderick Random* rather than *Waverley* was the model upon which they worked. This was natural enough. Scott's only story dealing with the sea is *The Pirate*, and the scene even of that is on land. When seafaring characters, like Dirk Hatteraick and Nanty Ewart, appear, they are always subordinate. Scott knew himself to be a landsman, and he wisely refrained from committing himself too far on an element unfamiliar to him. As it was, his deficiencies,

[1] *William Blackwood*, i. 242.

revealed in *The Pirate*, provoked Fenimore Cooper, who had served at sea, to write *The Pilot*. But though Cooper's novel preceded by several years the earliest of Marryat's, the latter drew nothing from it. On sea as in the forest Cooper was a romanticist, while Marryat was a realist.

By profession a sailor, Marryat is in his sea stories thoroughly at home with his subject. He had learnt in a school which, for the accumulation of such material as he best knew how to use, was better even than that of Nelson himself. His first commander was the great Cochrane, afterwards Lord Dundonald, whom he has depicted in the Captain Savage of *Peter Simple* (1834). In the Impérieuse under Cochrane, Marryat in three years saw more than fifty engagements and was thrice wounded. When therefore, influenced perhaps by literary ambition, he gave up his sea-faring life, he had accumulated in his memory an almost inexhaustible fund of stories, adventures, situations and characters. At the same time, he did not disdain external aid, and in *Peter Simple* he has borrowed from the extraordinary adventures of Donat O'Brien.

In respect of truth and reality, Marryat had an immense advantage over Lever. The latter's Irish dragoons are drawn from a merely superficial knowledge of the class; but Marryat thoroughly understood his sailors, so that even when he draws a caricature it is also a likeness. It has moreover been pointed out that his pictures of life at sea possess a special interest, because that life as he knew it has passed away for ever. Steam and machinery have completely changed the conditions. Marryat is our best first-hand authority on the great age of the English navy, and in the nature of things he can never be superseded. Some far greater literary genius may arise who shall reconstruct that life, as Scott reconstructed the life of various epochs of history, as Thackeray in *Esmond* reconstructed the age of Anne, as Dumas reconstructed the French musketeer, as Kingsley in *Westward Ho* reconstructed the Elizabethan sailor. But this can only be done on the basis of naval records and of the writings of such men as Marryat. He had seen and known what his successors can only imagine.

Perhaps the best, and certainly the most popular, of Marryat's stories are *Peter Simple*, *Jacob Faithful* (1834) and *Midshipman Easy* (1836); while *Japhet in Search of a Father* (1836) and *Masterman Ready* (1841) are good examples of a somewhat different type of story. In the more stirring sea-stories the life depicted is rude and boisterous to excess. Storm and battle, fun, frolic and adventure, wild escapade and reckless practical joke crowd one upon the other. The manner befits the matter. Marryat's style is careless, often incorrect, never polished; but still it is effective, and its very roughness has an affinity to the subject which a style more refined and literary would have lacked. Marryat makes no pretence of profundity. There is no plot, only a racy story. He has no key to unlock the human heart; but though his characters are not revelations, his habit of drawing from the life gives them a certain convincing naturalness which is often lacking in more ambitious studies. His range is considerable. *Newton Forster* (1832) does for the merchant-service what *Peter Simple* does for the royal navy. *Japhet in Search of a Father* is a well-told story wherein the interest is sustained without that rush of adventure which is characteristic of the sea-novels; and *Masterman Ready*, one of the numerous progeny of *Robinson Crusoe*, surpasses the work of the ordinary writers of boys' books almost as much as it falls short of the masterpiece on which it is founded. Probably few, judging from the sea-stories alone, would have anticipated Marryat's success in this quieter and, as regards style and tone, more domestic class of novels. Like Thackeray, Marryat transmitted to a daughter, Florence, a portion of his literary gifts; but it reappears in an attenuated form, and is, of course, exercised in other fields.

Marryat was not without his rivals and imitators. Of these, Captains Glascock (1787–1847) and Frederick Chamier (1796–1870) were, like Marryat himself, professional seamen and thoroughly familiar with their subject. They had not however, in any marked degree, the literary gift which is even more indispensable; for, as Mr Rudyard Kipling has proved, a landsman may acquire sufficient knowledge for the purpose, and may even satisfy the sharpest professional critic. Glascock began his career

with the *Naval Sketch-Book* (1826), three years before Marryat's first publication, but in his subsequent writings he was influenced by Marryat. So was Chamier, who, through his novels *Ben Brace* (1836), *The Arethusa* (1837), and *Tom Bowling* (1841), is rather better remembered in the present day than Glascock. His stories however contain little that is not better given in Marryat's, and they hardly deserve a permanent place in literature.

Much superior to either of these men was Michael Scott (1789–1835), whose talent for description and fluent narrative more than counterbalanced his inferiority in technical knowledge to the professional writers. He passed some years in the West Indies, and there, and in his voyages to and fro, he acquired that experience of the sea and of life in tropical climates which he afterwards used to very good purpose in *Tom Cringle's Log* (1829–1830) and *The Cruise of the Midge* (1836). Scott was one of the writers whom Blackwood enlisted in the service of his magazine, in the pages of which both of the above-named books appeared. De Quincey admired *Tom Cringle* so greatly as to declare that in some of his sketches the author had "the mingled powers of Salvator Rosa and of Hogarth[1]." The date of *Tom Cringle's Log* is sufficient proof that Scott was not an imitator of Marryat. The superficial resemblances between the two writers are due to similarity of topics: in manner of treatment they diverge widely. Marryat is by far the better story-teller, and his books have far more unity. He is also the superior of Scott in energy and rattling spirit; but, on the other hand, Scott's style is more cultivated and his tone more refined than Marryat's. Neither is there much affinity between Scott and Fenimore Cooper, though the Scottish writer has been affiliated to the American. Probably he followed, consciously or unconsciously, the method of the *Noctes Ambrosianae*. There is the same extravagance, the same inequality, the same boisterous mirth and humour, the same disregard of sequence and connexion.

After the death of Marryat, James Hannay (1827–1873) in *Singleton Fontenoy* (1850) seemed for a moment disposed to take

[1] Mrs Oliphant's *William Blackwood*, i. 443.

up the novel of the sea. He had in boyhood served in the navy; but he never repeated this experiment, though he became and continued to be a professional man of letters, displaying in his *Satire and Satirists* a greater gift for criticism than he had shown for fiction.

All of these writers more or less closely cohere with one another in groups; but there were besides in the latter part of the time of Scott and afterwards a few who worked independently and sometimes in remote fields. One was Thomas Hope (1770–1831), author of the once famous *Anastasius* (1819), a story which illustrates better than most the tendency of prose-fiction to lose its flavour. It was doubtless partly its theme—the adventures of a modern Greek—which led to its being attributed to Byron; but so high was the opinon held of it that there seemed nothing extravagant in the supposition that it was the work of one of the two or three men of widest European reputation. Now, probably, few readers get through it without weariness.

In those days the Levant was "the East"; but James Morier (1780?–1849) went farther, and in his *Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (1824), with its sequel four years later, in which Hajji Baba is brought to England, and in *Ayesha, the Maid of Kars* (1834) he produced books at once amusing, instructive and genuinely literary. Hajji Baba is a sort of Eastern Gil Blas—a Persian adventurer who in the course of a wandering life meets with all manner of experiences, the very conception of which demanded on the part of the author a familiarity with Eastern life which at that date no one but himself possessed, and which only two or three, like Sir Richard Burton and Mr C. M. Doughty, have since rivalled. There is probably no faculty more rare than that which enables a man of the West to realise the character of the East, and this faculty Morier possessed in perfection. The narrative in *Hajji Baba* is excellent; the style is simple and agreeable, never pretentious, but always rising easily to the level of the occasion.

Samuel Warren (1807–1870) was somewhat less isolated than these two. He found his subjects in England, and he had affinities with Theodore Hook before him and with Dickens after

him. In his *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician* he origirated a type now almost as well established as the detective story or the story of the sea. Like many other initiators, Warren at first found difficulty in getting a hearing; the publishers were, as usual, afraid of novelty; and it was only after the MS. had been hawked about to weariness that it was accepted by Blackwood. The title sufficiently indicates that the work is not a regular novel. It is a series of sketches, which, beginning in 1830, continued for many years to appear at intervals in the magazine. The great merit of the sketches is their verisimilitude. The author, a man bubbling over with harmless vanity, relates with pride to his publisher how the *Diary* was attributed to this or the other famous physician, and how overwhelmed men were with admiration of the "prodigious talents" of the unknown author. Once again, in *Ten Thousand a Year* (1839–1841), Warren won the widest popularity. Good judges compared him with Dickens, not to the advantage of the latter. The book is a novel, rather than a series of sketches like the *Diary*, and it is amusing enough in a somewhat farcical way, but it was shrewdly remarked that the author not only never had £10,000 a year, but never knew a man who had it. As the great majority of his readers were in the same predicament, the defect indicated was unnoticed, the book was extremely popular, and Warren seemed to have good reason for regarding himself as a writer in the forefront of literature. But he had really written himself out. He never again rose to the level of these two books; and even they have sunk into oblivion, because they are unsupported by those other great works which were expected to come, but which never came. Warren, it is true, wrote more, but never again was he decidedly successful.

There still remain two novelists who attained in their own generation greater fame than any of those hitherto noticed, with the possible exception of Lever. These are Edward Bulwer, afterwards Bulwer-Lytton and Lord Lytton, and Benjamin Disraeli, afterwards Earl of Beaconsfield. There are several points of contact between them. Both were politicians as well as men of letters, and each of them changed his side in politics; they were among

the most versatile as well as the keenest intellects of their time; and both were somewhat theatrical in their style.

The first Lord Lytton (1803–1873) betrayed a restless character and a versatile intellect from boyhood. He was an author while still in his teens; he won the Chancellor's medal at Cambridge; he disappeared from society, joined a roving band of gipsies, and even married a gipsy girl after the tribal fashion. The bent of his own mind as well as the tendency of the time turned him towards Byron. In 1827 he published a verse-romance in the Byronic style; and Byron's influence is manifest in Bulwer's first novel, *Falkland*, a story of crime which appeared in the same year. He afterwards called it his "Sorrows of Werther." The Byronic stamp is also upon his second novel, *Pelham* (1828), and upon the two famous romances of crime, *Paul Clifford* (1830) and *Eugene Aram* (1832). And the resemblance extended to his life as well as to his works. In 1827 Bulwer married, not in the gipsy fashion, but regularly. The marriage was as unhappy as Byron's own. Husband and wife separated, and accusations and upbraidings made their domestic affairs unpleasantly public. Mrs Bulwer, who was brilliant as well as beautiful, after the separation devoted her talents to literature for the double purpose of making money and of avenging her wrongs, real and imaginary. Her novels are spoilt by a violence of temper and language which goes far to explain the unhappiness and affords at least some excuse for Bulwer.

The estrangement from his mother which was brought about by this marriage made Bulwer dependent upon his pen. As he kept up an expensive establishment he was forced to work beyond his strength, and in doing so wronged his intellect and lowered the quality of his work. Yet the work was not enough for his restless ambition. Busy as he was in literature, he found time for politics. Entering Parliament as a Radical in 1831, he changed his opinions, and in 1852 passed over to the Conservative side. Six years later he rose to cabinet rank as Secretary for the Colonies. The success he achieved in Parliament is not the least remarkable of Bulwer's performances, for it was won in spite of the most serious disqualifications. Deaf, and hampered by a difficulty of utterance, he yet on occasion rose almost to the level of the greatest orators

of the day—at least so it seemed to those who heard him, just as it seemed to contemporary readers that he was almost, if not quite, the equal of the greatest authors.

A visit to Italy turned Bulwer's facile imagination towards the history of that country, and to this we owe *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) and *Rienzi* (1835). From 1836 to 1840 his principal works were dramas, which are noticed elsewhere. Then he broke new ground in the romance of *Zanoni* (1842). Succeeding on the death of his mother, in 1843, to the estates of Richard Lytton of Knebworth, he assumed the surname of Lytton, by which accordingly he is henceforth known, and under which he was in 1866 raised to the peerage as Baron Lytton of Knebworth. His romance of English history, *The Last of the Barons* (1843), was the latest work that bore the old name, or rather the initials, E. L. B. *The New Timon* (1846) is now best remembered for the bitter retort it provoked from Tennyson. Two years later came a second romance of English history, *Harold*, and immediately after it the epic, *King Arthur* (1848–1849), which Lytton, with the proverbial perversity of authors, regarded as the finest offspring of his mind. Another fresh start was made in *The Caxtons* (1849). This, its sequel *My Novel* (1853), and *What will he do with It?* (1859) form a group of domestic novels altogether different in kind from Lytton's previous work. He seems to have been conscious that the vogue of his earlier melodramatic romance was passing. *The Caxtons* was a *ballon d'essai*, and it was published with anxious care for the preservation of anonymity. The result of the experiment was encouraging; but for some reason Lytton suddenly wheeled round again, and in *The Haunted and the Haunters* (1859) and *A Strange Story* (1862) passed from the domestic hearth to the domain of the supernatural. The latter is an artificial mixture of dubious science, metaphysics and thaumaturgy; but the former is a ghost story weird enough and powerful enough to have tried the nerves of Thackeray. Some years passed during which Lytton added nothing that calls for mention to the list of his works, and but for the history of his closing years it might have seemed that he had written himself out. But *The Coming Race* (1871), another

novelty, showed that he was not only capable of writing still, but of writing something perfectly new. It is one of the earliest and one of the best of the stories which, taking a hint from the *New Atlantis* of Bacon, have attempted to forecast the changes to be wrought in human life by the discoveries of science; but in Lytton's case the satirical tone turns the edge of criticism directed against the futility of prophecy. Lytton was fond of disguising himself when he made an experiment, and he enjoyed the bewilderment and the conjectures of the critics as to the authorship of a work so unlike anything they knew to be his. *Kenelm Chillingly* (1873), one of his best novels, which has some affinities with *The Caxtons* group, was finished just before his death.

Lytton was the most versatile man of letters and the most sensitive literary barometer of his time. He attempted nearly everything, and in the opinion of many of his contemporaries he did nearly everything better than anyone else could do it. Charles Reade, adapting Byron's saying about Sheridan, declared that Lytton had "written the best play, the best comedy and the best novel of the age[1]." To his novels, his dramas, his lyrical and satirical verse and his epic, must be added miscellaneous essays, a history of Athens, and translations of Schiller and of Horace. And besides all this he was a politician, a successful public speaker and a figure in society.

But even if the view be limited to the novels alone, there is ample evidence of Lytton's versatility; and at several points valuable light is thrown upon the changes of popular taste, which Lytton either anticipates by some sort of magnetic gift, or else instantaneously responds to. Not without reason Harriet Martineau called him "a woman of genius enclosed by misadventure in a man's form[2]." There are others who have produced a greater number of works of fiction; but it may be questioned whether anyone has written novels on more diverse schemes. In *Pelham* Lytton is partly apostle and partly satirist of "the dandiacal body," which draws some sarcastic comment in *Sartor Resartus*. It is not an elevated species of work; but, such as it is, Lytton does

[1] Coleman's *Life of Reade*.

[2] Harriet Martineau's *Autobiography*, i. 352.

it brilliantly. His dandy is original: not content to follow fashion, he sets it. But *Pelham* is not a wholesome novel. There is an utter want of nature in it, and the moral tone is vitiated. Still less wholesome are the romances of crime, *Paul Clifford* and *Eugene Aram*, which succeeded it. The former is an account of the process whereby a highwayman is manufactured, and the latter shows by what steps one whom we are encouraged to look upon as a fine-minded scholar and gentleman is led to commit the crime of murder—to say nothing of the minor sins of lying and theft. Lytton was surprised at the outcry which was raised against these novels on the score of morality. He defended himself vigorously, repudiating the charges; and of course his admirers have adopted and developed the defence. It has been claimed that *Paul Clifford* helped in the process of humanising the criminal law which was then going on under the influence of Romilly; and that *Eugene Aram* is a moral sermon on the danger of yielding to the beginnings of vice—that the reader has only himself to blame if he does not pause and reflect that he too may become a thief or a murderer, should he neglect to root out from his mind every prompting to evil. But it is significant that Lytton wrote no more Newgate novels. For in truth the objections, which were shared by so vigorous a moralist as Thackeray, were well-founded. In these novels Lytton blurs the distinction between virtue and vice, and the whole tendency of his treatment is towards the conclusion, not indeed that highway-robbery or murder is commendable, but that there is much to be said in extenuation of these crimes; so much that, even in the case of a deed so dastardly as that of Eugene Aram, there seems to be little left to say in condemnation. Hood's handling of it in his poem is infinitely more simple, manly, strong and healthy.

While the thread of Byronism runs through all Lytton's work for many years, along with it is woven in one borrowed from Scott. The two novels of which the scene is laid in Italy form, with the romances founded upon English history, a group in which the debt to Scott is obvious. But wide is the gulf which separates Lytton from Scott. The former said that the principle of his own art was "intellectual," while he characterised Scott's as "picturesque."

Doubtless there is in Lytton more of conscious effort to be instructive than there is in Scott; but if he imagined that there was more to be learnt, he was profoundly mistaken. Scott is incomparably superior in ease and tact, in comprehension of the inner meaning of historical movements and in insight into character. Like the other imitators, Lytton loads his historical novels with crude matter which clogs the movement and darkens the understanding. And they are marred by another fault as grave or even graver. Nowhere is the meretricious quality of Lytton more offensive than it is in the historical romances. It goes far towards spoiling *The Last Days of Pompeii*, which is the best of the group, because it is the most imaginative. Except the two vivid letters of Pliny on the great eruption there was little to go upon, and the characters and their setting were in the main evolved out of the author's mind.

Far more marked was the change initiated by *The Caxtons*. Hitherto Lytton had been an unmistakable romanticist. At one time it was the romance of crime, at another the romance of history; now Byron and now Scott is the model; but whatever his theme, in the first twenty years of his life Lytton is never realistic. Now one of the great features of those twenty years is the rise of a school of realism headed by Thackeray. Romance continues to exist, and even draws new strength from Pre-Raphaelitism; but then the fundamental principle of Pre-Raphaelitism itself is realistic. A few dates will illustrate Lytton's extreme sensitiveness to prevalent tastes. *Vanity Fair*, the new gospel of realism, was issued in monthly parts in 1847 and 1848. *Jane Eyre* (which is realistic with a difference) appeared in the former year, and Mrs Gaskell's first novel in the latter. In 1848 also the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded, and the brethren vowed to paint faithfully and exactly what they saw. Nothing could have been more alien from all this than Lytton's previous work. He had been mystical and metaphysical, romantic and melodramatic, anything but realistic. His very criminals and scoundrels had been idealised almost out of knowledge. And yet, before people were well aware that there was a revival of realism, Lytton was in the midst of it. Just in the years when Mrs Gaskell was winning her reputation with her

stories founded upon the life of a Cheshire village, Lytton too was depicting English country life as it was before the revolution initiated by railways. It was not in Lytton's nature to do such work with the exquisite literary purity and truth of Mrs Gaskell; he never could wholly get rid of affectation. There is something theatrical in nearly all that he wrote, and in point of fact nearly every one of his novels was first worked out as a play[1]. But nowhere are his besetting sins so far subdued as in *The Caxtons* and *My Novel* and *What will he do with It?* All the influences which bore upon him in this group of novels tended to correct his faults. The general tone was necessarily quiet; there was nothing to encourage that Corinthian luxuriance of style to which his taste leaned; there was no temptation to paint the characters either brighter or blacker than human. Hence it is that many readers have found in these novels a purity and delicacy both in style and in thought which they seek for in vain in the rest of Lytton's works.

In the sketch of Lytton's career it has been noted that this realistic phase was followed by a reversion to mysticism and the supernatural, which he had treated also at an earlier date in *Zanoni*. It has sometimes been supposed that this too was a mere answer to a popular demand, and that the mind of the author was only playing upon the subject because it evoked general interest. But it is a mistake to imagine that Lytton had no keen personal interest in it. On the contrary, there was nothing he felt more profoundly, nothing with regard to which he was more thoroughly in earnest. Mesmerism, magic and all forms of the mystical, the mysterious and the supernatural, fascinated him. If he spoke about them he forgot all else; and a visitor to Knebworth describes how he became so absorbed in talking of spiritualism and theology that, getting into a boat, "he forgot to haul up the anchor, and rowed and rowed without observing that no way at all was made[2]." Again, John Blackwood the publisher, visiting Lytton in 1854, found a medium and a table-rapper in the house; while "a character came down from London every day to throw Lytton

[1] Letter of Earl Lytton in *The Life of Tennyson*, ii. 217.

[2] *Blackwood's Magazine*, January, 1905.

into the mesmeric trance for the cure of his ailments[1]." Lytton moreover believed himself to possess the gift of prevision, and occasionally he used it at the request of friends; but he always did so unwillingly, for to him the matter was altogether real and serious. Doubtless the author's profound feeling on the subject contributed to give *The Haunted and the Haunters* its weird power; and doubtless this same quality has helped to preserve for *Zanoni* an attractiveness which most of Lytton's novels have lost. Founded upon the mysteries of the Rosicrucians, *Zanoni* deals with the character and fortunes of a being who, having acquired the secret of immortality, voluntarily surrenders it at the call of love. To this human touch the book owes great part of its interest; but it moves far too much in the region of the supernatural, which may be an ingredient, but which cannot without serious injury be the staple, in works of art which appeal to the sympathies of men.

Lytton's reputation has sunk greatly since his death. While he was living and writing, his abounding energy impressed the world, and his remarkable versatility made him an object of perpetual interest; for it was impossible to prophesy what he would do next. In his time he played so many parts, and played them with such brilliancy, that he passed for a greater intellectual force than he really was; and when he died it seemed as if a star of the first magnitude had vanished from the firmament. Few now think that Westminster Abbey is his proper resting-place. Men of letters, indeed, were never quite in accord with the multitude as to Lytton's merits. Dickens admired him, but Thackeray's satire has a touch of bitterness and contempt unusually deep; and Thackeray's opinion was that of the majority of literary craftsmen. James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, denounces his "pinchbeck poetry, pinchbeck philosophy, pinchbeck learning, pinchbeck sentiment[2]." Meretricious, flashy, stagey, artificial,—tinsel, bombast, puppyism, are among the other adjectives and substantives that have been flung at him. And there is justification for them all. Time seems to be convincing that vague being, the general reader, that in this instance the critics and men of

[1] *William Blackwood and his Sons*, iii. 84.

[2] Salt's *Life of Thomson*, 119.

letters were right. Lytton is almost great in half-a-dozen forms of literary activity—almost a great dramatist, almost a poet if not a great one, almost a great novelist in three or four different styles. But he just wants the little more which is so much. He has no humour; there is hardly a character in his novels whom we care to remember: in his dramas we constantly meet with rhetoric where there ought to be poetry. It would have been better for his permanent fame had he completely achieved greatness in a single field, however limited, than to have come near it in many. In the long run, the Horatian maxim about mediocrity holds as true of prose as of poetry.

The life of Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881) is part of the history of the nation rather than of the history of literature; but there is a singular intimacy of relation between the literary phase and the political phase of his work which separates him from all contemporaries in whom likewise the two phases were united. Macaulay and Lytton were politicians as well as men of letters; but there is no difficulty in assigning the primacy, in their case, to letters. Gladstone also dabbled in literature; but *The State in its Relations with the Church* and *Juventus Mundi* are half forgotten; while *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* is preserved from oblivion by the wit of Huxley's replies. In Disraeli's case too it is plain enough that the politician who brought back "peace with honour," who purchased a controlling interest in the Suez Canal, and who made the Queen of England Empress of India, is a greater personage than the writer of *Vivian Grey* and *Coningsby* and *Tancred*. But the peculiarity in his case is the remarkable blending of the two phases, the shading of the one into the other, the sense he imparts that the man of letters is a statesman, and that the statesman never ceases to be a man of letters. There is no doubt that Disraeli's ambitions were from the first political, and his literary enterprises had a political aspect: he was, for example, a partner in Murray's abortive and financially disastrous Tory paper, *The Representative*[1], and he visited Lockhart at Chiefswood with a view to inducing him to become editor of the paper. But his whole mode of conception, in politics as

[1] Smiles's *John Murray*, ii. 186.

well as in his books, was artistic—usually with a dash of the theatrical.

In some respects Disraeli is the most interesting of all the young literary men of the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, as he was certainly one of the most intellectual and one of the most far-sighted. The dislike, amounting to rancour and even to virulent hatred, with which he was regarded alike by politicians and by men of letters would be incredible were it not so well attested. O'Connell's well-known suggestion that the name of the impenitent thief must have been Disraeli is typical. *Punch* satirised him with a bitterness which is rare in those genial pages, Lockhart called him "a Jew scamp," and "swab" and "traitor" are among the other names of scorn and loathing which were hurled at him. But in literature as in politics he lived all this down, and compelled recognition by the force of great qualities, moral as well as intellectual. His novels are divisible into three groups, distinct from one another in substance as well as separated in time. The first group includes all that he wrote up to 1837, when he entered the House of Commons. This was, naturally, the period of his greatest literary activity, and among the fruits of it are, besides minor items, six novels :—*Vivian Grey* (1826–1827), *The Young Duke* (1831), *Contarini Fleming* (1832), *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy* (1833), *Venetia* (1837) and *Henrietta Temple* (1837).

In this period there are several points of resemblance between Disraeli and Bulwer. Both were dandies and wrote works of the dandy school of literature. In later days Disraeli was more careless of dress than Gladstone; but the glory of his youthful attire was dazzling. His evening dress was "a black velvet coat lined with satin, purple trousers with a gold band running down the outside seam, a scarlet waistcoat, long lace ruffles falling down to the tips of his fingers, white gloves with several brilliant rings outside them, and long black ringlets rippling down upon his shoulders[1]." Keeping this resplendent figure in mind, we shall better understand *Vivian Grey*, Disraeli's novel of society, corre-

[1] *Correspondence of J. L. Motley*, quoted in the *Library of Literary Criticism*.

sponding to Bulwer's *Pelham*. It is a brilliant but somewhat crude picture of an unscrupulous young adventurer who forces himself upwards by sheer cleverness and effrontery. There are curious suggestions of Disraeli himself in the portrait; but Vivian Grey is detected and thrust out, a fate which Disraeli certainly did not contemplate for himself.

In this early group of novels there is more variety and much less unity of tone than we find in Disraeli's subsequent works. They seem to be the experiments of a young man who is feeling his way, and who has not yet finally decided what he shall be. Already in *Vivian Grey* there is a political element, but it is by no means so important as it came to be from *Coningsby* onward; for though the author's bias was to politics, he was as yet uncertain whether it might not be his destiny to become a professional man of letters. *Contarini Fleming* is in the analytical style which Bulwer adopted contemporaneously in *Eugene Aram*, but the materials out of which Disraeli's romance is built are wholly different. Already the influence of blood shows itself in the eagerness with which the author turns to the East and the peoples of the East. Far more Oriental, however, was the wild and fanciful *Tale of Alroy*, where the Jew is depicted, not an exile in a strange land, but in his city of Jerusalem, engaged in the attempt to restore the political glories of the race. The interest of *Venetia* lies less in the story than in the attempt to portray the two great poets, Byron and Shelley; while the last novel of the group, *Henrietta Temple*, is merely a piece of exaggerated and unwholesome sentimentalism, sometimes brilliant, but sometimes silly.

Out of this miscellaneous farrago it is easy to select two items which are integral parts of the true Disraeli. These are the politics and the Orientalism. All the rest, including the dandyism and the parade of psychological profundity, is superficial and temporary. But whatever might have been the case had his political ambitions been disappointed, Disraeli's entry into Parliament naturally intensified and made permanent his political interests; and the genuineness of his racial feeling is beyond doubt. Disraeli's sincerity has been questioned in almost every point, but it would need the very credulity of scepticism to imagine him insincere in all

his rhapsodies on the great gifts of the Hebrew race and its immense services to the world. Renegade though he was to the faith of his fathers, loosely as both the old faith and the new sat upon him, he was stirred to an ardour of emotion whenever he thought of the Jewish race. A small and alien band like the Jews, disliked and often persecuted, could not hold together at all unless it had this feeling highly developed. Shakespeare accordingly makes pride of race a feature in the character of Shylock, a Jew of a very different stamp from Disraeli.

The novels of the first period are the most purely literary in purpose that Disraeli ever wrote. Though there are political and racial elements in them, there can hardly be said to be either social or political theories expressed, or any doctrine taught. For that reason they have been preferred to the others by those who dislike the novel of purpose; but the soundness of the preference is questionable. The faults of Disraeli—literary as well as other—were greatest in his youth, and the very singleness of his literary aim tended to exaggerate them. He gradually laid aside other things as well as the gorgeous raiment of his early years. Though the lash of Thackeray fell upon *Coningsby*, it is in the early novels that the vices which he satirised are most developed. These novels are melodramatic, bombastic, turgid in style; the characters and the sentiment are exaggerated and unnatural; the tone of thought is Eastern rather than English; and the stamp of egotism is on every chapter.

After *Henrietta Temple* there came an interval of seven years, marked only by *The Tragedy of Count Alarcos* (1839). Then came *Coningsby* (1844), which was followed by *Sybil* (1845) and *Tancred* (1847). These three have certain characteristics in common, and are very clearly marked off from the novels of the first period. All Disraeli's indecision is gone: he writes now as a politician who happens to be also a man of letters; and his gift of writing is made to subserve his purposes as a statesman. All the three may be regarded as manifestoes of and to the Young England party. As such they are still profoundly interesting and important documents of the history of the time; and he who would write the history would do well to pay close attention to them. For Disraeli

in after years did much to make history; and a comparison between his writings and his political action proves that the former foreshadowed the latter, so that not infrequently a key to his politics may be found in this intermediate group of novels.

These novels do much to qualify the doubt as to Disraeli's political sincerity. Many, not only of his opponents, but of the members of his own party, felt that the inventor of Tory democracy could hardly be a sincere Conservative, and that the price of accepting it was too high to be paid even for his brilliant leadership. Whether it was too high or not is not the question here; but at least, in the face of *Coningsby* and *Sybil* and *Tancred* it is impossible to doubt that, to their author, this Tory democracy was far more than a mere temporary make-shift, or a scheme for catching votes at a general election. The transformed Conservatism of Disraeli's later years is just a political instrument for carrying out the ideas which are the substance of those three novels. It was believed that the turning of the public mind to social questions was a device for distracting men's attention from the reform of political machinery, and much ridicule was poured upon Disraeli's pronouncement that sanitation and the social improvement of the working classes were the real tasks of government. In those days *laissez faire* was unchallenged, and it was believed that social improvement would come of itself, if only we could get ballot boxes. In this declaration, however, Disraeli was simply repeating as a statesman what he had written many years before as a novelist. It is the doctrine of *Sybil*, in which he embodied the results of his own investigations into the industrial condition of England. He was severely taken to task for it by the champions of political and economic orthodoxy; but time has justified him, and the heresies of the middle of the century are the orthodox teaching of students of the industrial revolution in its latter years. Perhaps the greatest of all Disraeli's gifts as a statesman was his power of prevision; and it was never more strikingly shown than in this anticipation of the statesman by the novelist. He was a generation in advance of the opinion of the world. Both parties have now more confidence in social legislation than in schemes of redistribution and other tinkering of the machinery of Parliament. Without

intending it they have followed whither Disraeli led, and so have paid the most convincing tribute to his sagacity and foresight.

Disraeli anticipated not only the politicians, but, in the main, the men of letters as well. Carlyle, it is true, had preceded him in his social and political criticism; and in *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and nearly all his later novels Dickens is the advocate of social reform. But Disraeli is prior to Charlotte Brontë and Mrs Gaskell and Charles Kingsley in the handling of social problems. *Sybil* is as much devoted to the interest of the working man as *Alton Locke* or *Yeast*, and it is on the whole more pregnant and suggestive and practical than either of them.

In 1848 Disraeli became leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, and four years later he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is not surprising that in the press of business brought by such offices he found himself unable to continue his literary activity, and that many years passed before he could resume it. Thus the novels of the third group, *Lothair* (1870) and *Endymion* (1880), are the work of his old age. Both were published in intervals when he was free from the responsibilities of office. Both are disappointing, and the latter is especially so. They contain brilliant passages, but they are on the whole curiously flat and dull. The characters are stagey and unreal—a surprising fault in one whose business it had been to understand men. Both are political novels, like the intermediate group, but in a less interesting way, for they contain no such clear revelation of their author's mind as *Coningsby* and *Sybil* give. Now and then they show the persistence of interests of which Disraeli had already given evidence; for example, the Roman Catholic element in *Lothair* is cognate to the Puseyism of *Coningsby*. But on the whole they depend more on personality and less on principle than the earlier group.

There are certain writings the interest of which depends partly, or it may be mainly, upon the position and history of their authors. The commentaries of Julius Caesar are valuable not merely in themselves, but because they *are* the commentaries of Julius Caesar. The scribblings of Frederick the Great may have deserved all the gibes of Voltaire; but just because they were his writings they

could not be wholly worthless to the world. Herein too lies the special interest of the writings of Disraeli. The earlier ones are, as we have seen, a kind of prophecy of his political action, and all are a revelation of his character. Viewed in this light their very faults have a value. But it must be confessed that as pieces of literature they are often irritating. Their pretentiousness repels, their intense egotism grows wearisome, the tawdriness of style disgusts the critical taste. On the other hand, there are in nearly all some passages of real eloquence, as well as innumerable striking phrases and witty turns which redeem the faults and attest the greatness of the writer.

CHAPTER II

DICKENS AND THACKERAY

THE character of early Victorian fiction was determined, not so much by any of the writers who have just been passed in review, as by two greater men who were slightly posterior in date to most of them. The true successors to Scott, not in the sense that they imitated him, or were very close akin to him in their work, but in the sense that they became after him the leaders and chiefs of prose-fiction, were Dickens and Thackeray.

A moment's comparison between them and Scott reveals the nature of the change which was passing over the novel. It may be summed up in a word: there is less romance, and there is more realism. Dickens and Thackeray, even when they write historical novels, have "no use for the Middle Ages[1]." The scenes of *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens's two experiments in this sort, are laid just a little way behind his own time; while Thackeray's *Esmond* is a careful transcript, not at all in the romantic vein, of life, manners and literary style of that period which has least of all in common with the Middle Ages. In so far as romanticism survives, it survives with a difference. Even the streets of London are often treated romantically by Dickens. "He sought," says his most sympathetic critic, George Gissing, "for wonders amid the dreary life of common streets[2]." But from *Ivanhoe* to the romance of the slums

[1] Beers's *History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century*, 396.
[2] *Charles Dickens*, 30.

is a far cry indeed. The change is in the last degree significant, and not the less so although many elements of romance still survived.

Charles Dickens (1812–1870), the son of a clerk in the Navy pay-office, concerns us principally in respect of his early life; for after his fame was established nothing happened to him which produced any noteworthy effect on his literary work. But the history of his boyhood and youth is well worth noticing; because it was then that he acquired the experience and accumulated the materials which afterwards formed the staple of his books. The authoritative life of Dickens was written by his friend John Forster (1812–1876), a good biographer and a great editor, during whose tenure of office *The Examiner* won, and deserved, an influence rarely equalled in the history of journalism. In literature Forster's tastes ran to history; but to him the essence of history was biography, and so his principal works are a series of lives,—*Lives of Eminent Statesmen* (1837–1839), *Life of Goldsmith* (1848), *Life of Landor* (1869), *Life of Dickens* (1872–1874), and the unfinished *Life of Swift* (1875). Forster is always careful and sound, and his narrative is often very interesting. In the cases of Landor and Dickens he can never be superseded; for he had direct personal knowledge which no one else can ever acquire, and he had access to materials now destroyed or dispersed. But he had not that power of penetrating character which is the special gift of the great biographer, and he never makes his subjects live, as Carlyle does, and Lockhart, and Boswell. His *Life of Dickens* therefore is an interesting, but hardly a great, book. It tells much about Dickens; but for a comprehension of the man it must be supplemented by a study of his works.

Not the least important deduction which may be drawn from Forster's biography is that the picture Dickens drew of himself and his early life in *David Copperfield* is substantially accurate. He himself was the miserable little drudge depicted in the novel. He himself went through the wretched experience of the blacking warehouse, and his school was the streets of London. The mysterious 'deeds' which led up to the imprisonment of Micawber

in the Marshalsea were actually executed by John Dickens, and they resulted in his imprisonment. Charles Dickens could never refer to this period of his life without bitterness. The pen which wrote *David Copperfield* was often dipped in his own blood; and if he violated the law of filial piety in the picture there drawn of his parents and his home, the sufferings he endured in the process may be set against the sin. Assuredly few sons have had more just ground of complaint on the score of an uncared-for childhood and neglected education.

After a time a legacy lifted the family out of its most pressing difficulties; and in 1824 Dickens was sent to a school which had been selected rather for its 'gentility' than for educational efficiency. He remained there for two years or rather more, and at fifteen he entered a lawyer's office, in which however he stayed only about a year and a half. He then became a reporter, first on the staff of *The True Sun*, and afterwards for other papers. As a reporter he acquired great skill. He was determined to succeed, he had untiring industry, and he toiled at stenography until he became, to use his own words, "the best and most rapid reporter ever known." This result was doubtless due to that quality which struck all observers of Dickens in later years—his almost preternatural energy. This quality produced in many a curious illusion. They imagined him to be phenomenally healthy and strong: in reality, his "habits were robust, but his health was not." His tireless activity was a matter rather of the spirit than of the body.

Dickens however was conscious of talents for which the profession of a reporter afforded no outlet. He judged himself, quite correctly as he subsequently proved, to possess a gift for the stage, and began to train himself to be an actor. Fortunately he was diverted from his purpose, and instead started to use his pen not merely to report the words of others but to write his own thoughts. For this end he had acquired an education better than he knew in the blacking warehouse and in the streets; he had been storing his mind unconsciously with excellent literary material; and the success of his first venture fixed the whole course of his life. He has himself described how tremulously he dropped

his first article into the letter-box of *The Monthly Magazine*, and how eagerly he watched for its appearance. It was printed in December, 1833, under the title of *A Dinner at Poplar Walk*; in the *Sketches by Boz*, of which it was the germ, it is now known as *Mr Minns and his Cousin*.

For some time Dickens still continued to act as a reporter. On the staff of the *Morning Chronicle* he was at once reporter and contributor. But the success of the *Sketches by Boz* (1836) and the inception in the same year of the scheme of *The Pickwick Papers* made him by profession an author. The design of the publishers, as is well known, was to publish a series of plates of amusing sporting scenes by a popular caricaturist named Seymour, and to accompany the plates with a sort of running commentary of letter-press. Two other names besides that of Dickens are associated with the story of *Pickwick*. The plan, such as it was, came from Robert Smith Surtees (1803–1864), and the man who was first asked by the publishers to supply the letter-press was not Dickens, but Charles Whitehead (1804–1862).

Surtees, who afterwards won some fame as a writer of sporting novels, was at this time just at the beginning of his career. In 1831 he started the *New Sporting Magazine*, which he edited for about five years. It was in this periodical that his creation, John Jorrocks, the hero of *Jorrocks's Jaunts* (1838), first appeared. Though the humour of this character seems to the reader of the present day not very bright or refined, its success tempted others to pay Surtees the homage of imitation. Even so severe a critic as Lockhart was sufficiently pleased to suggest that Surtees should write a work of fiction on a more regular plan. The result was *Handley Cross* (1843) and the rest of the series of sporting stories which still keep the name of Surtees alive. His works, however, are more worthy of remembrance for the sake of Leech's illustrations, than for their literary merit.

The other writer, Charles Whitehead, stands on a different plane. His reputation, after rising to a respectable height, underwent eclipse, to be revived again by the industry and research of a writer of the present day, Mr Mackenzie Bell, whose critical

biography. *A forgotten Genius: Charles Whitehead*, recalled him to memory. Unfortunately, most of those whom Mr Bell's volume induced to study Whitehead regarded him, in virtue of *The Solitary* (1831), as a poet; and this has told against his fame, for though *The Solitary* shows a real, it does not show a great, poetic gift. Whitehead's true talent lay in prose-fiction; and it was so high that, but for his failing of intemperance, he would probably have taken rank among the best novelists of the time after the two great leaders. Whitehead's most ambitious works are *Richard Savage* (1842) and the historical romance, *The Earl of Essex* (1843). His masterpieces are the former and a short story full of tragic power, *The Confession of James Wilson*. *Richard Savage* is a story in which Whitehead follows closely the life of the real Savage, the friend of Johnson. The interest, especially in the earlier part, is remarkably well sustained. The conception of the character of Savage himself is masterly, and several of the figures, both real and imaginary, by whom he is surrounded, are very well portrayed.

Richard Savage was unwritten when the design was formed of what in the hands of Dickens became *Pickwick*; but Whitehead was well known as the author of *The Solitary*; and he had just published the *Lives and Exploits of English Highwaymen, Pirates and Robbers* (1834) and *The Autobiography of Jack Ketch* (1834)—items in that literature of crime which was popular in those days. Among the articles in *Fraser's Magazine* doubtfully attributed to Thackeray is a review of the former work, which, if it was really by Thackeray, establishes a literary connexion between Whitehead and the great rival of Dickens. At this time then, Whitehead being known as an active man of letters, the publishers asked him to write the sketches which were to accompany Seymour's plates. He declined, because he was afraid he could not work with rapidity enough to supply month by month the necessary "copy"; but at the same time he recommended his friend Dickens as a man who had the necessary faculty for rapid work.

Dickens accepted the commission; Seymour died by suicide after the issue of the first number; and the letter-press proved so rich and racy, and the characters conceived in the brain of

Dickens so amusing, that the original conception of a subordination of the letter-press to the plates, or at most an equilibrium in importance between them, was abandoned. Dickens became the author of *The Pickwick Papers*; the plates were illustrations of what he chose to write, not pictures for which he had to invent suitable commentary; and though the sporting element continued to be represented in the person of Mr Winkle, it receded into the background. But *Pickwick* still retains traces of the original proposal. It is practically destitute of plan, and is not so much a novel as a miscellany into which Dickens pours all his experience and observation of life and character. The fact that he was thus fortuitously left without a plan was a happy thing for him; for the plot is usually the weakest part of his books. In many cases the crudities and improbabilities are astonishing, and but for the exuberant wealth of humour they would be offensive[1]. Once or twice in after years Dickens constructed a good plot. Thus *A Tale of Two Cities* is admirable as a story; the mysteriousness of *Edwin Drood* is proved by the ingenuity which has been lavished in vain to find the solution; and if *Barnaby Rudge* is less baffling, the coherency at least of the plot is established beyond dispute by the fact that Edgar Allan Poe actually predicted its development. *Barnaby Rudge* began to run about the end of January, 1841; and in May Poe contributed to a Philadelphia paper a prospective notice in which he "explained and foretold the exact plot of the as yet unpublished story[2]." No such feat would have been possible if the parts of Dickens's story had not been linked together in a chain of logic. And yet most readers will agree with the judgment which Poe nevertheless pronounced, that in making this attempt Dickens was mistaking his own powers. He is never so happy as when in *The Pickwick Papers* he wanders where he pleases and carries his creations with him and his readers with them. This absolute freedom is one reason why the first of his important books remains the greatest.

[1] Gissing brings together a number of instances of Dickens's abuse of coincidence (*Charles Dickens*, 57).

[2] J. H. Ingram's *Biographical Sketch of Poe* quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism*, 565.

To call *Pickwick* natural might occasion misunderstanding, for there is a great deal of caricature and exaggeration in it; but at least it is not theatrical; and wherever he proceeds on a plan Dickens becomes theatrical.

In common with all his contemporaries Dickens was indebted to Scott; but his mind was cast in another mould, the circumstances of his early life were quite unlike those of Scott's, and his relation to the great romancer was never intimate. Scott was a man of immense reading; in youth Dickens had not the opportunity, and in manhood he does not appear to have had the taste, to read much. His early repertory of books is however noticeable, because his mind was so strongly influenced by them. It included the three principal novels of Smollett, *Tom Jones*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Don Quixote* and *Gil Blas*. The predominance of the picaresque novel is the most remarkable feature of the list; and as Smollett supplied more than any other author, so Smollett's influence remained the strongest on his mind. So far as nineteenth century canons of taste and morals would allow him, Thackeray made it his business to revive Fielding; and Dickens is similarly affiliated to Smollett.

The design of *Pickwick*, however, owes nothing to these writers. It was obviously indebted not only to *Jorrocks*, but to *Tom and Jerry*, which may be best described as the joint work of Pierce Egan the writer and of Cruikshank the artist. Even after the change made by Dickens there is still some resemblance. He can hardly be said to borrow from Egan, who was greatly his inferior, but he adopted some suggestions from him. He owed far more to George Colman the younger, who revealed to him what could be made of the London streets. It was Colman who taught him that the life of the streets, their most trivial incidents, their sights and sounds and smells, were material for literature. The mere suggestion was enough: the mind of Dickens was full of such things, and when he began to write he found himself faced rather with the difficulty of selection than with any lack of matter. One of his faults as an artist is his tendency to introduce unnecessary characters, characters who drop in from nowhere, exercise no influence on the story, and sometimes

disappear unnoticed. Such excrescences would hardly have been created, for the story does not suggest them. But they were present already in memory, and the writer failed to notice their irrelevancy.

Notwithstanding Smollett and Egan and Colman and Hook, few writers have been more essentially original than Dickens. A hint here and there—a turn of phrase, a situation, the outline of a character—he certainly adopted; but the substance of his novels comes from his own experience. Keen observation, a retentive memory and a remarkable instinctive power of reading character, were the gifts to which he owed his literary success. He not only possessed these gifts in an extraordinary degree, but they were precociously developed. His boyish insight into character must have been almost unexampled; for he declared in his maturity that he had never seen cause to change the secret impression of his boyhood with regard to anyone whom he had known then.

The extent to which Dickens built upon his own direct experience may be inferred from two facts. He is pre-eminently the novelist of London, and he is pre-eminently the novelist of low life. But it was just in London, and just among the lower classes—with the middle class at the upper extreme—that all his real and vivid experience lay. He frequently wanders from London, but he always seems relieved when he gets back to it. Often he carries London with him into the country. The Pickwick group are cockneys through all their journeyings; the wandering players and showmen, the beggars and vagabonds, who abound in the novels of Dickens, are creatures of the city. Contrast with these the corresponding characters in the novels of Scott—Edie Ochiltree in *The Antiquary*, the smugglers in *Guy Mannering*, Wandering Willie in *Redgauntlet*. Scott is never so happy as when he can get his city characters spirited away to the mountains and the wastes. But wherever they go the Crummleses and the Jarleys and the little Nells of Dickens are bits of London. The great city was part of his very being; wherever he went its atmosphere was around him. Though not by birth, yet by adoption, he was one of the truest of Londoners. He knew it as few

men have ever known it. He knew it topographically, industrially, socially—within the limits of the lower and middle classes. He could penetrate into all its obscure nooks. He was familiar with all its strange trades and with those who followed them—the dustman, the articulator of skeletons, the marine-store dealer, the man who made a living by recovering bodies from the Thames, and many less innocent than he—Dickens knew them all better than most of us know our next-door neighbours. It was from these materials that he built up his books. It was because he was absolutely free in *Pickwick* to use them as he liked, and moreover because he was there skimming the cream of his past experience, that he rose in that book to a height he never afterwards reached.

It has been necessary to limit the statement that Dickens knew London socially. "Society" he did not know at all, and above the rank of the lower middle class his knowledge grew more and more scanty. This limitation is naturally most marked in the early novels, but it continued to the end. The assertion that he could not delineate a gentleman in the conventional sense of the word is substantially true. Many of his poor have that true nobility of character which is the inner meaning of the word "gentleman"; but when he tried to depict the manner, Dickens totally failed. Once or twice in later days—notably in the case of Sydney Carton—he was successful; but his gentlemen were usually theatrical figures or colourless abstractions. The experience of his youth afforded him no foundation whereon to build, and without such foundation he was helpless. It is well known that his characters (at any rate his successful ones) are all portraits, or, it may be, mosaics pieced together from fragments of observation; and in his case at least the maxim that what is learnt in youth is best learnt evidently held good. He never assimilated experience that came to him after he reached manhood as thoroughly as he assimilated that of his boyhood and youth. Some writers seem to possess the gift of divining that which they have never seen; but, great as was Dickens's endowment of imagination, it fell short of this. Shakespeare could have known little of courts and castles in his early days; and yet, from the first, his kings and

barons are every inch royal and noble. Those of Dickens seem to come not from Windsor but from Wardour Street. His early life told. Though the graduate of the street carried from his university a rich fund of knowledge and experience, there was a side of him which was not only undeveloped, but which was partly atrophied, by this experience. Hence that want of refinement, that slight strain of vulgarity which marred the goodness of Dickens as it likewise mars his work. In character he was thoroughly sound—"every inch of him," as Carlyle declared, "an honest man"; but more than one observer thought that he was not quite a gentleman. And there is evidence in his life that they were right. Carlyle suffered agonies because he had to make a public display of himself on the lecturer's platform: it is impossible to imagine him going through the public readings of Dickens. Whatever may have been the merits of the questions unhappily in dispute between Dickens and his wife, a man of true refinement would have shrunk from writing what he wrote on the subject; and though he did not mean the objectionable letter to be published, he ought to have known that he ran the risk of, and indeed almost invited, publication.

In manner of publication as in general plan *Pickwick* followed the example of *Tom and Jerry*, and was issued in twenty monthly numbers between April, 1836, and November, 1837. *Pickwick* was the earliest English novel of the first rank which was thus published; but the method is that by which most novels by known writers are now published; for the fact that they appear in magazines or journals, along with other matter, is an unimportant detail. There can be little doubt that it tends to looseness of construction. An author must be unusually methodical who is not occasionally compelled to write against time; and there are few men whom a forced rapidity of composition suits as it suited Scott. Everyone knows that Thackeray constantly wrote while the "printer's devil" waited for "copy" outside; but it is perhaps not so well known that Dickens kept his finger on the public pulse while his story was in progress, and did not disdain to alter his plan if he found his popularity declining[1].

[1] For an instance see Gissing's *Charles Dickens*, 69.

The success of *Pickwick* amazed author and publisher alike. The former, always a keen business man, had agreed to do the work for £14 a month, and at the time considered the pay good. "'The first order for Part I.' that is, the first order for binding, 'was,' says the bookbinder who executed the work, 'for four hundred copies only.' The order for Part XV. had risen to forty thousand." Thus at twenty-six Dickens sprang at once to the height of popularity. No man in his own day rivalled him, and no predecessor excepting Scott. The secret was the excellence of the work, and in a minor degree the novelty of the subject. The endless resource displayed in *Pickwick*, the ready wit, the unlimited humour, the enormous number of characters, all deftly touched, supplied something pleasing to readers of all sorts. But the matter was not only excellent, it was also essentially new. Just as Scott had had predecessors in the realm of historical romance, so, as we have seen, there had been writers before Dickens who had attempted the theme of cockney life and character. So Shakespeare had predecessors in the drama, and Homer doubtless had them in the epic. Darwin was anticipated in the doctrine of evolution and George Stephenson in the invention of the locomotive. In each case the common sense of men decides that the tool belongs to him who can use it, the idea to him who can make it effective. And so, notwithstanding Colman and Egan and Hook, Dickens is rightly adjudged the father of the novel of London life.

He has had a numerous progeny. Of late years "tales of mean streets" and revelations of the Ghetto have poured from the press, and whiffs from all sorts of heaps, far more unsavoury than those of the decaying cabbages which Dickens found in Colman, have been blown to the nostrils. The methods of the modern realistic school are not at all like those of the author of *Pickwick*. They take themselves very seriously, as Artists with a capital letter and men with a mission, and feel it their duty to depict Slumland in all its repulsive sordidness. Sometimes they raise in the reader's mind a suspicion that the repulsiveness is even heightened and exaggerated for effect, or perhaps under misapprehension. Missionaries and doctors who have worked in such districts

declare that this is the case, that there are alleviations in the lot, gleams of brightness shot from human nature itself, which have no place on the canvas of the realist. Probably the error arises from defective imagination. The realist is prone to forget that reality is a chameleon which takes very different colours according to the light in which it is viewed, and that Slumland, as it seems to the native-born, is not quite the same place as that which is visible to the eyes of the dweller in Park Lane. At the best it is unlovely enough; but it may be hoped that there is no human lot which has not in it a little more humanity than is to be found in the conceptions of the modern realist.

The spirit of Dickens was far removed from that which animates such works. By contrast with Scott he may be called a realist; for there are no mists of time or space to throw a glamour over his subjects. He takes what lies nearest to his hand, what he knows best. Even in *Pickwick*, before he had developed a 'purpose,' there is stern reality enough in the scenes in the Fleet prison. But in the strict sense of the word he is not a realist at all; on the contrary, his work is rather the romance of the streets of London. By way of reaction against the romantic tendency to choose themes from high life, to depict distant times and to feed the mind on marvels, the realist tends to lay stress upon the sordidness of the streets, the depth of the miseries, the vileness of the vices he depicts. He sometimes runs risk of forgetting that there is anything else to depict. By a curious perversity he comes to regard ugliness as more real than beauty, and vice than virtue. It is not so with Dickens. His instinct is rather to pick out the gleam of beauty from the midst of ugliness and the example of virtue from among the multitudes of the vicious. There are many vile characters in his pages, Fagin and Sikes and all their crew; and there are many sordid scenes. Frequently his taste is questionable; and at least one scene, the picture of spontaneous combustion, is loathsome. But such scenes are aberrations, things not at all of the essence of the method. They are partly due to the fact that Dickens was himself uncertain how far his reaction ought to carry him. That he was not proceeding upon a clearly-understood principle is shown plainly enough by the haphazard

origin of his masterpiece. He simply felt that common life supplied excellent literary material, that he was familiar with it and could handle it. He suspected that others, like himself, would prefer to the Middle Ages their own time and country; but he had thought out nothing, he had no views on the question of what was and what was not proper material for the novelist. Spontaneous combustion might do as well as anything else.

Dickens however shares this vagueness as to principle with the great majority of imaginative writers; and at the beginning his tact usually kept him right. It was when he took upon him to be a reformer of schools, of legal systems, of government offices and of morals and society in general, that he committed his worst mistakes. Prior to this stage his humour was the guide. He used what was humorously effective, and rejected what was not. Afterwards, his canon of inclusion or exclusion was serviceableness to the purpose, or the reverse; and as it was not a canon of art it naturally led to error in art.

Notwithstanding his errors—perhaps in his errors as much as elsewhere—Dickens remains the romancer of the London streets. This is evident from the intrinsic qualities of his work as well as from a comparison with recent realism. The statement that the characters of Dickens are portraits or mosaics requires explanation and qualification. They are always founded on, but they are rarely transcripts of the real; the germ lies in experience, but it is nourished into life by imagination. The imagination of the author harmonises the whole Pickwick group. Winkle, with his lying pretence to sportsmanship, treated realistically, would be repellent; treated humoristically, though he rouses the justly indignant Pickwick to call him "humbug," he moves the reader only to mirth. The Weller family, realistically handled, might have been sordid; but under the treatment of Dickens they become the very quintessence of faithful service, of wholesome fun, of acuteness strangely mingled with simplicity.

If the Slumland of the realist be darker, it is to be feared that that of Dickens is far brighter and better than the actual Slumland of London. There is a glamour over it, a light that never was on the haunts of vice and destitution. What Dickens gives us is not

the bare hard fact, but the fact suffused with the glow of a rich imagination. Poetic justice reigns: the wicked are punished, and the righteous get compensation for their suffering, even as Job received twice over all that he had lost. There are horrors in prison life; but Pickwick descends as a liberating angel to Jingle. Oliver Twist falls among thieves; but poetic justice restores him safe and uncontaminated to his true position. Abominations have been perpetrated in schools; but the good knight Nickleby redresses the wrongs of Smike, and makes at least his latter days peaceful.

In Gissing's admirable monograph on Dickens, to which reference has several times been made, this tendency to idealisation is dwelt upon, and, sympathetic as the criticism is, there is a consciousness of superiority and almost a touch of condescension in the contrast with the sternness and unswerving truth of modern realism. But now when the solid atom itself seems to be dissolving, some doubt is permissible as to the degrees of reality of the "real" and the "ideal." It is certain that Dickens "idealised"; but it is not so certain that in doing so he wandered farther from the truth than the realist. On the contrary, as has been hinted already, a vivid imagination may have kept him nearer to it. The realist is usually a spectator of that which he describes, whether it be animate or inanimate. His characters are to him something external; he believes that he understands them, but he does not identify himself with them. This is true even of a man so great as Thackeray, who constantly stops to comment on and discuss his "puppets," and who is obviously quite aware of the strings by which they are moved. But Dickens, according to those who knew him, absolutely was for the time the character he was shaping. All creative writers have in some degree a feeling of intimate concern with the fortunes of their characters; but probably no one else has left such evidence of it in the letters he wrote and in conversation with friends as Dickens. It is at least possible that the mesmeric power and the healing touch which Dickens possessed may have sprung from the same root. All may be forms of sympathy, and sympathy usually means understanding. Dickens's mode of conception was intuitive, the realist's is critical.

The former is less under control than the latter, but the results it yields are more sure.

After *Pickwick* the life of Dickens is mainly a record of publications. *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* were finished respectively in 1838 and 1839. *The Old Curiosity Shop*, begun in 1840, was completed in 1841. Then Dickens found it necessary to relieve the strain of such rapid production by a holiday. It was no wonder; for though Scott, in the decade of his greatest glory, had written better and nearly twice as fast, no other novelist, before or since, has produced with such rapidity works comparable in merit with these. The most voluminous writers, like G. P. R. James and Anthony Trollope, stand on a much lower plane. To rest himself therefore Dickens in 1842 visited America. He went prepared to be pleased, and his reception was magnificent; but by some fatality his opinion of America and the Americans gradually sank throughout this first visit. Here, as in so many other points, Dickens contrasts with Thackeray. The latter also visited America; but he expected little, and unlike Dickens he was delighted. He was even absurdly suspected of having written *The Four Georges* in order to flatter American prejudice against monarchy.

Wherever he went Dickens made literary capital, and soon after his return he published his impressions and experiences in the shape of *American Notes* (1842). Frequently as the writings of Englishmen about America have given offence, they have seldom offended so deeply as these *Notes* of Dickens. The indignation was not altogether reasonable. The main subjects of Dickens's censure were, in the first place, slavery, which the better mind of America herself practically condemned some twenty years later; secondly, the political system, the corruptions of which have been denounced in no sparing terms by American writers; and thirdly, spitting, a filthy habit in the suppression of which America seems to be as pre-eminent now as she was fifty years ago in the practice of it. Slavery was a subject tabooed in those days alike to Americans and to Europeans. The other questions might have been handled without offence by a native; but a young people is sure to be sensitive, and the criticism of a

foreigner, if it is at all sharp, will be resented. Dickens no doubt observed the Shakespearean injunction to set down naught in malice; he forgot that there are cases, of which this was certainly one, when it is wise to violate the other side of it, and extenuate something. He returned to the subject in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–1844), where he deals severely with that want of principle in business which he had found to be rather admired as smart than condemned as immoral. Long afterwards (1867–1868) he paid a second visit to America, when he was generously forgiven his unsparing criticisms, and when his own impressions were much more favourable.

Several times he visited the continent of Europe, partly for economy and partly to acquire new experiences. He spent a great part of 1844 and 1845 in Italy; and for many months in 1846 and 1847 he lived first in Switzerland and afterwards in Paris. To the former visit we owe *Pictures from Italy* (1846), which were originally contributed to *The Daily News*; and it is probable that but for the acquaintance with Paris made on the latter visit, and renewed in 1855 and 1856, *A Tale of Two Cities* would never have been written. It must be added however that that book owes more to Carlyle's *French Revolution* than to the direct observation of Dickens. The story is far better than its author's other historical tale, *Barnaby Rudge*. It contains no such absurd caricature as the picture of Chesterfield in the latter novel. But Dickens had neither the education nor the turn of mind necessary for success in historical fiction, and it would be ridiculous to claim for him, in this department, a position with Scott or with Thackeray.

The year 1856 may be taken to be the culmination of Dickens's career. The novel then in progress, *Little Dorrit* (1855–1857), is certainly not his best; but it was in 1856 that Dickens attained the summit of his boyish ambition by the purchase of Gad's Hill Place; and soon after there came the signs of an unmistakable decline. In 1858 occurred the separation from his wife, and just before that the unfortunate readings had been initiated. Dickens had given a few public readings at Birmingham in 1853, the proceeds of which were devoted to a local institution; but it was

in April, 1858, that he first read in public from his own works for his own profit. Various motives united to bring him to this determination. Probably he wished distraction from the thought of the impending separation, and he undoubtedly found it in the excitement of large and enthusiastic audiences. Besides this, Dickens had been conscious from the first of histrionic talent, and he had found frequent outlet for his powers in amateur theatricals. His style of reading, which was eminently dramatic, gave him the outlet his nature craved. Carlyle, who witnessed one of the readings, saw "a whole tragic, comic, heroic *theatre* visible, performing under one *hat*"; and performing extraordinarily well too—for he declares that Dickens "acts better than any Macready in the world[1]." Dickens moreover saw in the readings a way of winning wealth as well as of gratifying this taste, and also, it may be, his vanity; for, though Forster denies it, there seems to be little doubt that vanity was well marked in his character. He was one of the recognised dandies, and his tendency to over-dress was commented upon by more than one observer. On the pecuniary side his expectations were more than satisfied. From first to last, according to the calculation of Mr George Dolby, who managed the greater number of the readings, Dickens cleared about £45,000.

Just as completely, however, the result in other respects justified those who had attempted to dissuade him from his purpose. On this as on nearly every other point he consulted his friend Forster, suggesting, as early as 1846, that, "if it were not *infra dig.*," much money might be made by giving readings from his own work. Forster frankly gave his opinion that it *was* "*infra dig.*"; and though he failed ultimately to prevent the step, he did an immense service by helping to delay it for twelve years. On the question of dignity, the weight of opinion has been on the side of Forster. Such a relation as this between a great author and his public was unprecedented, at least since the days of the minstrels; and under modern conditions it seems unworthy. It is a position far less dignified than that of an actor playing a part in his own drama, which Shakespeare felt to be degrading. Who can imagine

[1] Froude's *Carlyle*, iv. 229.

Scott touring about the country and thrilling his audiences with the siege of Torquilstone, or raising a laugh with his Dominie Sampson or the Baron of Bradwardine with his bootjack? Shelley declaiming *Adonais*, Tennyson mouthing out the sins and penitence of Lancelot and Guinevere, Browning drawing tears by the sorrows of Pompilia—these are figures which the imagination refuses to picture. But Dickens lost far more than dignity. The readings told prejudicially on his literary work, both lessening the quantity and lowering the quality; and in all probability they shortened his life. The story of the American tour of 1867–1868 is painful reading. The indomitable struggle against sleeplessness and exhaustion and manifold illnesses would be grand if the occasion had been worthy. It was almost as determined as Scott's closing struggle after the catastrophe of 1826; but Scott was labouring to clear his name from dishonour, Dickens to add a little more to what was already enough. Yet his motive was not purely mercenary, he was at the same time indulging his taste. His manager declares that the pleasure Dickens derived from the readings is not to be told in words.

If not the readings, then some other cause operating at the same time, had a disastrous effect upon the literary work of Dickens. The novels he produced after the initiation of this unhappy experiment were *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *The Uncommercial Traveller* (1860), *Great Expectations* (1860–1861), *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–1865) and the fragment of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). Not one of these novels is of the first class, and the explanation seems to be that the author was overworked. The amount of nervous energy spent upon the readings was enormous, and even Dickens had not an unlimited fund to draw upon. He had been, besides, from the year 1850, harassed by the task of editing periodicals, first *Household Words* (1850–1855), and then *All the Year Round*, which he conducted on his own lines till his death. When Thackeray followed the example of Dickens and undertook to edit *The Cornhill Magazine*, Tennyson lamented that so great an artist should "let his brains be sucked" in such a way. The poet was right: both for Thackeray and for Dickens it was a waste of first-rate powers upon second-

rate work. It is however necessary to bear in mind, with reference to the decline in the quality of the work of Dickens, that he never showed any development of faculty, but rather, on the contrary, a decline even before the beginning of the readings. Nothing he produced after 1850 is quite first-rate; on the whole, nothing he afterwards wrote is quite so good as *Pickwick*.

The principal works of Dickens, in addition to those already mentioned, are his Christmas books, the best of which are *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845); *Dombey and Son* (1846–1848); *David Copperfield* (1849–1850); and *Hard Times* (1854). He himself thought *David Copperfield* the best of all his writings; and in this preference he certainly showed none of the proverbial fondness of authors for their weaker offspring. He was probably influenced by the fact that it is the novel which contains most of himself; but in purely literary merit it surpasses all except *Pickwick*, while it is far more regular than that wonderful book.

The popularity of Dickens among the rank and file of readers of his own generation needs no explanation; but there is something surprising in his instantaneous acceptance among critics, especially when we compare his fate with that of his great contemporary and rival in the art of fiction, Thackeray. In 1837 the name of Dickens was one of the best known in English literature. In 1841 the freedom of the city of Edinburgh was conferred upon him amidst public rejoicings. The veteran critic Jeffrey, who had stamped upon the something new in Wordsworth with his "This will never do," and who had but grudgingly recognised even Scott, was enthusiastic in praise of Dickens. Contrast the fate of Thackeray. Eight years after the conclusion of *Pickwick* and four years after those public rejoicings in Edinburgh, the editor of *The Edinburgh Review* (Macvey Napier) writes to Abraham Hayward to ask if he knows anything of "a Mr Thackeray," who has been recommended to him as "a good hand for light articles." A periodical like the *Edinburgh* must "keep up in respect of names," and its editor has to be very much on his guard "in engaging with mere strangers[1]." At this date Thackeray had

[1] Melville's *Life of Thackeray*, i. 193.

written *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* and *Barry Lyndon* and much besides, mostly, it is true, anonymously or pseudonymously.

There is a good deal in Dickens that offends a critical taste, and not least his pathos; but this too we find to have been perfectly acceptable, to the critic as to the general reader, in his own day. Macaulay shed tears over Florence Dombey. Jeffrey wrote to Dickens that he had cried and sobbed over the death of Paul and felt his heart purified by the tears. "Since the divine Nelly was found dead on her humble couch, beneath the snow and the ivy, there has been nothing like the actual dying of that sweet Paul, in the summer sunshine of that lofty room." Thackeray was almost as much overcome. "When he read the number of *Dombey* containing the death of Paul, he put it in his pocket, went out, and flung it down before Mark Lemon at the *Punch* office, exclaiming excitedly, 'There's no writing against this; one hasn't an atom of chance. It's stupendous[1].'" Within a few years this writer, who "hadn't an atom of chance," had himself written the death-scene of Colonel Newcome, which is worth all the pathos of Dickens, from *Pickwick* to *Edwin Drood*, many times over. America was, if possible, more enthusiastic than England, and Bret Harte bears testimony to the power of the story of Little Nell over the rough miners of California.

There were one or two dissentient opinions. George Eliot says that Dickens "scarcely ever passes from the humorous and external to the emotional and tragic without becoming as transcendent in his unreality as he was a moment before in his artistic truthfulness[2]." Ruskin, writing long afterwards, but still expressing the opinion of a contemporary, says that "Nell, in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, was simply killed for the market as a butcher kills a lamb[3]." But the opinion of Thackeray and Jeffrey and Bret Harte was the normal one of the time. There has been a great change since then. The majority of critics now are either

[1] Melville's *Life of Thackeray*, ii. 27.

[2] *The Natural History of German Life*, quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism*.

[3] *On the Old Road: Fiction Fair and Foul.*

censorious or at best apologetic with reference to the pathos of Dickens. The discriminating but yet admiring Gissing examines the question, and finds, generally, that Dickens sometimes elaborated pathetic *scenes*, in the theatrical sense of the word; and, specifically, that "nothing can be said in defence of Jo," the crossing-sweeper. About Paul Dombey's death he remarks, cautiously, that "if the situation is to be presented at all, it might be much worse done." Little Nell he pronounces to be "a child of romance," and her death "purely symbolical." In that light, "as a story of peaceful death it is beautifully imagined and touchingly told." Mr W. D. Howells, on the other hand, finds the Little Nell scenes "preposterously overdone[1]."

The change tends to shake confidence in criticism and to undermine all belief in a standard of taste. Are the older critics right? Is Paul Dombey's death one of the greatest scenes of pathos in literature? Is it stupendous? Or must we content ourselves with saying that "if the situation is to be presented at all, it might be much worse done"? Generalised, the modern verdict is that the pathos of Dickens is overdone and too long drawn out, and that it shows a lack of self-restraint. In short, in his pathos he follows his usual literary practice of exaggeration. His humour rests on exaggeration; and he chose to set up his pathos on the same basis. The question therefore is, Did he obtain results artistically as good as he obtained in his scenes of humour? His contemporaries answered yes; men of a later day, with few exceptions, say no.

It may be permissible to refer once more to Matthew Arnold's excellent habit of carrying in his mind some test-lines of poetry, and of trying by their standard, as by a touchstone, that which at the moment he was criticising. Such a literary touchstone must obviously be of admitted excellence; and it will be all the safer if it is old enough to have stood the test of time. Now in all literature there is probably no single line that has been more universally felt to be charged with pathos than "the Virgilian cry," *Sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.* In all literature there is no more pathetic scene than the death of

[1] *Heroines of Fiction*, quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism*.

Cordelia. But the method of Virgil and Shakespeare is wholly different from that of Dickens. There is no exaggeration, no dwelling upon the subject, no beating out thin. The effect is produced by the simplest and fewest words possible. Not one of those gathered around the body of Cordelia makes a phrase: the emotion is tense, but there is no eloquent declamation to work it up. Dickens, on the other hand, "wallows naked in the pathetic." He omits no circumstance, no object animate or inanimate, which can add, as he conceives, to the "effectiveness" of the death-bed or the funeral. The company as it assembles, the tolling bell, the church, all have their place in the rhetoric wherewith the funeral of Little Nell is celebrated. And it is just this which offends the modern taste in the pathos of Dickens. It is not sufficiently pure. The theatrical element is repellent. The author "protests too much," just where he should not protest at all.

So far then, and the point is a cardinal one, the reputation of Dickens has immensely declined since his death. The phenomenon of a decline, followed by a recovery, partial or complete, is an extremely common one in literary reputations. For the reason assigned, however, it seems improbable that Little Nell and Paul Dombey will ever be throned again among the most pathetic figures of literature. For humour, on the other hand, the reputation of Dickens stands almost if not quite as high as it ever did. It wears well in spite of exaggeration; doubtless because the feelings are less deeply engaged and the taste less sensitive. Many have been more refined, but few have ever been richer, in humour than Dickens. *Pickwick* is itself almost a library of humour, grotesque in the Fat Boy, satirical in the trial scene, riotous almost everywhere. Dickens was good at conceiving humorous scenes; but he was still better at delineating humorous characters, and his highest creations in this sort are veritable triumphs. Sam Weller and Sairey Gamp and Micawber stand among the first of the humorous characters of fiction. The two latter are grotesque but irresistible; the first is equally irresistible, and, as a better figure of a man, is in a higher style of art. The delicately suggestive touch of Jane Austen, or Lamb, or Sterne, is quite out of the range of Dickens; his comedy is broad to the

verge of farce. But it is exuberant and healthy. He can always raise a laugh, and the laugh is always an innocent one.

The merits and defects of Dickens's portraiture are too obvious to admit of much dispute. He is not one of the small band of great artists who have been able to represent men exactly as they lived. There are no fine shades or nice touches in his work; but again the reader is struck with his inexhaustible fertility. It has been said somewhere that his characters would make a town populous enough to send a member to Parliament, and Pierce's *Dickens Dictionary* proves that the statement, wild as it seems, is almost literally accurate. Of course the majority of these characters are but slightly sketched, many make only a casual appearance, not a few have nothing to do with the story and might be omitted without the slightest loss; but their mere number is a striking proof of the exuberance of Dickens's imagination, of his wonderful keenness as an observer and of the marvellous retentiveness of the memory in which all the fruits of observation were stored.

The principle upon which this inexhaustible raw material of human nature is dealt with is that which governs the work of Dickens in every aspect—exaggeration. The strongest colours are laid on with the largest brush. From beginning to end his characters rarely, if ever, impress the reader as all-round, normal men and women. The comparison with Ben Jonson has been repeatedly made, and is almost inevitable. To the tribe of Ben, not to the school of Shakespeare, Dickens belongs: he is a delineator of humours rather than a painter of men. There is usually some label attached to his characters—a habitual phrase, a gesture, a physical peculiarity—like a trade-mark to goods. In *Pickwick* the sporting proclivities of Winkle result from the original plan, and so, in a minor degree, do the peculiarities of the other members of the club, Snodgrass, Tupman and Pickwick himself (in the first phase). But we have besides in *Pickwick* itself the fatness and sleepiness of the Fat Boy, the broken, jerky sentences of Jingle and the grotesque professionalism of Bob Sawyer. In the subsequent novels the 'umbleness of Uriah Heap, the jollity of Mark Tapley and the elegant profanity of Mantalini, are all instances of the same sort. Among external marks or symbols

may be mentioned the chronic buttonlessness of Peggotty and Sairey Gamp's umbrella. The list might be indefinitely enlarged.

Dickens, then, relies much on exaggeration, and is frequently in the realms of the grotesque. The result is often successful, but it is never in the highest style of art, except, perhaps, in the one case of Sam Weller. Shakespeare makes capital out of the fatness of Falstaff, but it is not the essence of his humour; while in Dickens too often the peculiarity *is* the essence. Silas Wegg is for ever declining and falling off, Captain Cuttle flourishing his hook and making a note of everything. The reader expects the recurrence, and might have some difficulty in recognising the character if the label by any mischance fell off. Even in Mr Micawber, though he is so infinitely amusing that it is distasteful to hint a fault, there is a little too much of the shiftless waiting for something to turn up.

In the non-humorous characters the same fault prevails. Mr Dombey is self-importance and pride of purse incarnate, Pecksniff is not so much a man as Hypocrisy with a capital H. Such portraiture defeats itself. It is unconvincing. Given a Pecksniff in real life, even simple-minded Tom Pinch would not be deceived by him; because the very beginnings of self-deception are absent from Pecksniff himself. His hypocrisy is "gross as a mountain, open, palpable," like Falstaff's lies. But wherever hypocrisy is completely self-conscious, it must be cynical; and Pecksniff is not cynical. Burns's Holy Willie is painted in strong enough colours. He too is hypocritical; but he is uneasy, partially self-deceived, anxious to deceive himself more completely. And so he makes the Almighty responsible for the grossest of his sins. The "fleshly thorn" may be a heavenly visitation lest the gifted servant become too proud. If so, the obvious duty of the pious servant is submission; and thus indulgence in sin becomes obedience to the divine will. There is nothing in Pecksniff one-tenth part as subtle as this: when he asks Charity to remind him to pray for Mr Anthony Chuzzlewit, who has done him an injustice, he is as clear about his own hypocrisy as the reader.

Such being the way of Dickens, he naturally did not succeed unless he had some strongly-marked feature to work upon;

and so his novels become a collection of oddities. It is this, more than the grotesqueness of any single individual, that gives them an air of unreality. As we are aware that abnormal beings do exist, the presence of a few such in fiction seems natural enough and even gives zest; but a world peopled by eccentrics and faddists is not the world we know. Dickens, of course, has his ordinary men and women too; but the misfortune is that they are as a rule uninteresting, and the whole flavour of his work is drawn from the abnormal.

A necessary consequence of this prevalence of exaggeration and abnormality is that the characters of Dickens are either eminently good or emphatically bad. As in the old Moralities, we have the Vice set against the Virtue, hero opposed to villain. Nicholas Nickleby and Ralph, Pecksniff and Tom Pinch, Bounderby and Stephen Blackpool, are a few examples of this sort of opposition. Here again the reader feels a certain unreality. The elements in human character are curiously mixed, and grey is a more common colour than either black or white. Dickens sees only the one element or only the other. But he is essentially an optimist, and so he is always ready to reform his villains—with a few exceptions, necessary by way of warning and example. Pecksniff must be reduced to beggary, or the lesson would not go home; but the unprincipled Jingle may become a valuable member of society, with a brand-new character, because he is not the text of a sermon.

At an early date in his career Dickens began to take himself seriously and, to his own detriment as many believe, to exhibit a purpose in his work. The novel of purpose was by no means new in English. The works of Richardson are full of purpose, and it is the essence of Godwin's. On the other hand, the robust understanding of Fielding, the keen artistic instinct of Jane Austen and the healthy sense of Scott, all rejected it. But the sober English mind always tends to introduce it anew, and the time was once more ripe. Carlyle reproached Scott for want of seriousness, and sneered at him as the "restaurateur" of Europe; and possibly Carlyle's sneer may have had some influence on Dickens. Just before Dickens purpose reappears in the early works of Lytton,

and a little later the political novels of Disraeli show it in another aspect. Kingsley's *Hypatia* is a document in the great High Church *versus* Protestant controversy, and the opposite party have their own documents in the shape of Newman's *Callista* and *Loss and Gain*. Yet another phase appears in Kingsley's *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*, in Mrs Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*. Charles Reade's *It is Never too Late to Mend* and *Hard Cash* are inspired by the same spirit. Thackeray wrote no novel of this class; but there is something cognate to it in the "sermons" and asides which abound in nearly all his books.

Dickens came under the sway of the same ideas, and felt that he too must vindicate his dignity by teaching. Even in *Pickwick* we see in the scenes in the Fleet prison the intrusion of purpose, and in most of the later novels it is very prominent. *Oliver Twist* deals with the administration of the poor law and the making of criminals, and has thus some kinship with the "Newgate novels" of Lytton and Ainsworth, from which nevertheless it is widely separated. For, while they enlist sympathy on the side of the criminal, Dickens is careful to give to his hero a purity almost impossible under the circumstances. The obvious purpose of *Nicholas Nickleby* is the reform of schools. *Hard Times* is an attack upon the orthodox political economy—a *Latter-Day Pamphlet* in the shape of a story. Other novels deal with the Court of Chancery, or the government offices, or with specific vices, such as selfishness, or the modern English worship of wealth.

The abstract question whether purpose is or is not prejudicial to art is not worth discussing. There is no reason in the nature of things why it should be prejudicial, and the true question is whether in a particular instance it has or has not led the author astray. Of course the danger is the serving of two masters: Art and Purpose may in certain cases be as irreconcilable as God and Mammon. The danger which besets the writer who has a purpose in view is that of exaggeration; and this is especially prejudicial in the case of a man like Dickens, whose natural tendency was towards excess. Zeal for his purpose led to still greater excess. He saw nothing in its natural proportions, because he was deter-

mined to see everything in the light of his purpose. In his eagerness for reform he seems to forget that rule and method are essential. Red tape is not a bad thing in itself, and some of the ways of the Circumlocution Office are indispensable to the conduct of business. Character fares in the same way. Light and shade disappear. So too Dickens's style becomes overcharged, his sentimentality grows unwholesome, his most offensive violations of taste are committed, all under the influence of this wish to teach. For him certainly purpose was prejudicial.

There is one other reason why, for Dickens, the intrusion of purpose was deplorable. For wise and successful handling it demanded thought. The assailant of an educational system, the critic of the poor law, or of the machinery by which the business of the nation is transacted, or of the social and economic relations between employer and workman, ought to be a reflective person. But of all great English novelists Dickens was the least reflective. It would be absurd to put him in this respect on a level with Thackeray or with George Eliot. By some Scott is supposed to be shallower than these writers, because he never analyses like the latter, and rarely stops to comment, like the former. But in truth there is in him a larger wisdom in respect both of social life and public affairs and of individual character, than there is in either of the others; and whoever knows the Waverley Novels will have at his command a fund of thought on many ages and countries and institutions. The clan system in Scotland—vagabondage—the law's delays—the relations of Saxon and Norman after the Conquest—of Christian and Jew—superstition—religious fanaticism, are only a few of the subjects on which Scott, wholly without parade and in the easiest way, throws the light of his genius. Dickens, on the other hand, is purely and simply an observer. It has been noticed already that, outside the limits of his own experience, his hand loses its cunning in portraiture. It has been noticed also that there is little or no evidence of development in his work. Slight changes indeed there are, but no evolution of the higher from the lower. In both cases the reason probably is that he observes with the most extraordinary keenness, but reflects comparatively little. Hence too his early maturity. The powers

of observation soon reach perfection, while the reasoning faculty may go on growing till late in life. For the same reason Dickens never was a reader, and suffered little from his ignorance of books. No book could give him impressions half as vivid as he could derive from the London streets. His manner of depicting character also indicates abnormal powers of observation and comparatively little reflectiveness. There is ample evidence on the subject, for his correspondence, especially with Forster, is full of his books, and we constantly see his characters in the making. There is absolutely no analysis: he never reasons out a character, but he identifies himself with it. He lives in the lives of his creations, suffers with them and rejoices in their good fortune. The method is excellent, and doubtless the singular vividness of Dickens is due to it.

In all this however there is no ratiocination; nor is there any evidence that Dickens possessed more than an ordinary endowment of the reasoning faculty. This is another point in which he contrasts with his great contemporary, William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863), a man of reading and of culture, a man as intimately acquainted with the higher ranks of society as was Dickens with the lower, as reserved and reticent as Dickens was exuberant and gushing. The contrast between the early history of the two men has already been touched upon. The story is well known how Thackeray, artist as well as author, was an unsuccessful competitor for the post of illustrator of *The Pickwick Papers*, vacant by the death of Seymour; and it was eleven years after the publication of the masterpiece of Dickens before *Vanity Fair* raised Thackeray to a position comparable to that of the younger author. Thackeray's early years were a period of many trials and sorrows, but also of much happiness. Like other Anglo-Indian children, he was sent home for education; and on the way had a glimpse of the great Napoleon on his lonely island. At the Charterhouse he was not very happy, and his earlier references to it have some satirical bitterness; but time mellowed his feelings, and in *The Newcomes* the Swishtail Academy is softened into the Grey Friars. From the Charterhouse Thackeray in 1829 went to Cambridge, where he was one year junior to Tennyson,

who in later days "always regarded Thackeray as the head of English literature in the Victorian era[1]."

Thackeray does not seem to have worked very seriously at the University, nor to have gained much directly from its studies, though he gained incalculably from the friendships he there formed. It is significant to note that, while Tennyson was the author of the prize poem for 1829, Thackeray wrote a burlesque on the subject; and it is curious that this was published in a paper called *The Snob*. Leaving Cambridge in 1830, he crossed to the Continent, where he made a considerable stay at Weimar. He saw and had some slight intercourse with Goethe, his recollections of which are given in a letter printed in Lewes's *Life of Goethe*. Returning to England in 1831, he entered a lawyer's chambers to prepare for the bar; but he seems to have shown no more zeal than his own Pendennis in the study of the law. His successor in the chambers is said to have found Thackeray's desk there stuffed with sketches and caricatures[2]. Thackeray was evidently unsettled by the fact that he had inherited from his father a small fortune, the possession of which seemed to absolve him from the necessity of coming to an immediate decision as to his career in life. Before he came of age he lay awake "meditating on the wise and proper manner" to employ it[3]. A few years after he acquired control, it was all lost in ill-advised newspaper speculations. In 1836 he married, and was radiantly happy until the sad breakdown of his wife's health plunged him into sorrow. Some of the most touching lines of the *Ballad of Bouillabaisse* point the contrast between his life before and his life after this disaster.

At this time Thackeray's attention was divided between art and literature. He spent much of his youth in Paris as a student of art, and all his life long he handled the pencil with greater pleasure than the pen. His illustrations of his own books are, as aids to the text, among the best ever drawn, and prove that he had a very decided gift for art. But though the conception

[1] The second Lord Tennyson, quoted in Melville's *Life of Thackeray*.

[2] *Thackeray's Works, with Biographical Introductions*, III. xxviii.

[3] *ibid.* III. xxv.

is admirable the drawing is very faulty, and it was fortunate that in the struggle literature carried the day.

The early writings of Thackeray were all contributions to periodicals—*Fraser's Magazine*, *The New Monthly Magazine*, *The Times* and other papers. A little later, from 1842 to 1854, he was a regular contributor to *Punch*, his connexion with which was broken owing to the novelist's disapproval of the attitude of the great comic journal towards Napoleon III. Much excellent work was done for these papers. *The Book of Snobs* (1848), so redolent of the genius of Thackeray, is composed of articles which originally appeared in the pages of *Punch*, where also the *Ballads of Policeman X* were first printed; while *The Yellowplush Papers*, *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* and *Barry Lyndon* were introduced to the world by *Fraser*. All these, as well as the *Paris* and *Irish Sketch-Books* and the *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*, belong to the first period of Thackeray's authorship, which we may take to extend to the start of *Vanity Fair*. At the end of the period Thackeray still remained, as we have seen, a person whose name was of doubtful value to a great periodical.

There is much that is admirable in the work of those opening years—keen observation, humour, satire, fun, pathos, the gifts of a poet as well as those of a master of prose. All that we subsequently find in Thackeray may be detected here in germ, and much of it is to be seen in full bloom. The philosophy of life expounded in *Vanity Fair* is presented, only more crudely, in *The Book of Snobs*; and there are in the *Sketch-Books* passages of mingled satire and pathos which will bear comparison with all but the best of his subsequent writings. But his work was still uneven, as the work of a journalist, written for daily bread, must necessarily be; and there is only one book of the period for which, as a whole, any critic has ever claimed a place among the greatest of Thackeray's works. *Barry Lyndon* was as yet the only convincing proof he had given of power for sustained composition; and for sheer intellectual force he probably never surpassed it. But excellent as *Barry Lyndon* is, it is the sort of book which wins admiration without establishing any emotional *rapport* between the author and the reader. It never had, and

it has not to this day, a tithe of the popularity of Thackeray's other novels; far less could it rival those of Dickens. It proved however, once for all, that Thackeray possessed a marvellous power of taking and consistently keeping to a point of view. The life of a scoundrel, written from the scoundrel's standpoint, by a man who scorns and loathes him, yet who never for a moment forgets that to himself the scoundrel seems wholly admirable, who makes him the sole witness against himself, and who out of his own mouth convicts him of being the greatest villain since Iago, is surely one of the most remarkable achievements in literature. It is comparable to the dramatic monologues of Browning, but these are less elaborate. Still, even in *Barry Lyndon*, the canvas is small. There is far less variety than in an ordinary novel. There is absolute proof of Thackeray's power to write a story of the Defoe species; but there might remain a doubt whether he could enter with equal success into other types of character, and whether he could successfully exhibit them moving and acting together.

It is the books of this period which give the strongest support to the view that Thackeray was in heart and soul a cynic, about which something will be said hereafter. There is certainly a strong flavour of gall in nearly all his writings of the first period, and there is comparatively little to sweeten it. Why, it has often been asked, did Thackeray concern himself so much about snobs? And it is not obscurely hinted that the most probable answer is, he was a snob himself. But a better reason can be assigned. Thackeray was, first, a realist, secondly, a moralist. The realist saw that snobbery was, in point of fact, one of the great vices of modern English society; and the moralist (whose business is not with that which is already sufficiently well, but with that which is not so well) desired to cure it. The Englishman's hell, says Carlyle, is chiefly not making enough money; but Carlyle knew that there was another hell, the hell of not being "respectable," not being a "gigman." It was from the fear of this hell that Thackeray wished to deliver his countrymen, and he tried to do so by making it ridiculous. In the effort he made the mistake to which youth is always prone. Laying too much emphasis on the one thing, he gave a false impression of life by omitting all

that did not seem to be to the purpose. He learnt wisdom with years, and there is nothing more remarkable in his development than the gradual softening of tone in the succession of the great novels.

Not till the appearance of *Vanity Fair* did Thackeray give quite indubitable proof of the greatness and of the wide range of his genius. After the fashion countenanced by Dickens, that novel was issued in numbers, in 1847–1848. Perhaps the most convincing proof of the inherent viciousness of this system is to be found in a comparison between the structure of the one great novel by Thackeray which was written and published as a whole, and that of his other stories, in which the system of periodical publication was followed. The exception is *Esmond*. Now *Esmond* is one of the most perfectly constructed stories in the English language. It has no intricate plot, but its unity from beginning to end, the adaptation of part to part, the harmony of tone, the systematic progress of the narrative, must strike every reader. But no one would say this of Thackeray's other works. *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes* have each their advocates for the first place among his works; but they are all broken, interrupted, meandering in their narrative, undisguisedly so in all cases, avowedly so in the case of *Vanity Fair*; and they are great novels not because of this, but in spite of it. The inference from these novels would be that Thackeray was deficient in constructive power; but *Esmond* disproves that inference, and throws us back on the other explanation, that the novels were written piecemeal, in response to the printer's clamour for copy. Of course, an author who had the resolution to write his story beforehand, as a whole, would be independent of the mode of publication; but in a delightful *Roundabout Paper* Thackeray has admitted that it was not so with him. Though capable of strenuous work, he was indolent and inclined to procrastinate. Hence most of his novels were written by snatches, in varying moods, at intervals of a month. Some have thought that Scott lowered the quality of his work by rapidity of execution; but it is far more certain that Thackeray lowered the quality of his by its spasmodic character.

Vanity Fair is one of the most interesting novels of the nineteenth century, not only for its admirable style, its power of thought and its wisdom, but for the relation in which it stands to other works of fiction both before and after it. Dickens, as we have seen, had broken fresh ground half-unconsciously. He was not fully aware of the significance of his interesting himself and his readers in the scenes and the characters of the London streets; but the choice of ground in the *Sketches by Boz* and *The Pickwick Papers* was the entrance of democracy into literature. The element of realism in it is obvious; but we have also seen that it is superficial.

With regard to Thackeray the opposite is true. He is consciously and deliberately a realist. He calls *Vanity Fair* "a novel without a hero." No man, the old saying runs, is a hero to his valet: the valet sees him too close, his defects and weaknesses are too obvious. Ludovicus Rex, as Thackeray shows in a most instructive series of sketches, is a very imposing figure as he appears before the world; but there is no mystery to the valet, he is accustomed to handle Rex, the trappings, too familiarly for reverence, and to see the poor little shivering "forked radish" of a man, Ludovicus, in all his insignificance without them. Now the novelist is valet to his characters: he is omniscient; all the vices as well as all the virtues are known to him. Hence, in this "vanity fair" of a world which Thackeray depicts, there is to him no hero. He will set no man on a pedestal and worship him; he will impartially expose the weaknesses of all, and impartially give credit for the virtues—when there are any. Carlyle's doctrine, on the contrary, is that there *are* great men, who are almost infinitely superior to the little men, and that the vital thing for little men, the only way of growing out of their littleness, is to find the great man, and to reverence and follow him when found. If no man is a hero to his valet—so much the worse for the valet. A comparison between these two contrasted doctrines, and an examination of the question how far Thackeray really remained faithful to his own, will bring us very near the core of his work.

By critics not in complete sympathy with him Thackeray has been repeatedly charged with cynicism. Not long ago he was

branded as the apostle of mediocrity. He belittles all his characters, it is said, disbelieves in grand virtues, and associates goodness with pettiness of character and feebleness of intellect. Contrast his clever women with his good ones—Becky Sharp and Beatrix Esmond with Helen Pendennis and Amelia Sedley. The two charges are at bottom closely akin, and though they are not altogether true, yet they are not without some foundation. It is Thackeray himself who sings

> "How very weak the very wise,
> How very small the very great are."

But the charge of cynicism is at least mistakenly expressed. It is sufficient to appeal against it to *Esmond* and to the *Roundabout Papers*, and to ask what cynic ever conceived such a scene as the deathbed of Colonel Newcome, or such a character as that of the man there passing to his account. To the true cynic human nature is not merely faulty but essentially mean; and a man who held such a creed could never have drawn such a character as Colonel Esmond, the Bayard of English fiction. There is more insight in the judgment of Charlotte Brontë: "Whenever he writes, Mephistopheles stands on his right hand and Raphael on his left; the great doubter and sneerer usually guides the pen, the Angel, noble and gentle, interlines letters of light here and there[1]." But this still exaggerates the cynical element, and there is yet more truth in the indignant repudiation which Shirley Brooks expressed in *Punch* over the grave of its old contributor:—

> "He was a cynic! By his life all wrought
> Of generous acts, mild words, and gentle ways;
> His heart wide open to all kindly thought,
> His hand so quick to give, his tongue to praise!
> He was a cynic! You might read it writ
> In that broad brow, crowned with its silver hair,
> In those blue eyes with childlike candour lit,
> In that sweet smile his lips were wont to wear.
> He was a cynic! By the love that clung
> About him from his children, friends, and kin;
> By the sharp pain light pen and gossip tongue
> Wrought in him, chafing the soft heart within!"

[1] Quoted in Shorter's *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, 418.

Again, though most of Thackeray's characters—like the vast majority of human beings—are mediocre, it is not true that all of them are. Harry Warrington is not. George Warrington is far from being a faultless man, but "mediocre" is just the word that will not describe him. Still less will it describe Henry Esmond; and if Colonel Newcome is mediocre in intellect, in character he certainly is not. But to prove Thackeray the apostle of mediocrity it would not be enough to show that all his characters were mediocre; their creator must also rest content with mediocrity, or at any rate refrain from aspiring beyond it. But Thackeray was essentially a preacher, and the substance of all his sermons is, cease to be content with mediocrity, intellectual or moral, learn its weakness, its worthlessness, its powerlessness for good, its fatal potency for evil. The four Georges were mediocre men, no more greatly vicious than they were great in intellect. Thackeray drew masterly portraits of them; but his object is to show how benumbing, how degrading, how deadly mediocrity is.

Yet the old proverb, there is no smoke without fire, is justified here. Thackeray is not a cynic, he is not an apostle of mediocrity; but nevertheless those who have so described him have not been wholly wrong. There are in Thackeray's work elements which in a less kindly, and above all in a less reverent, nature would be cynicism; and his scheme of work gives a great, perhaps an undue, prominence to mediocrity. Certainly while reading him we are all the better for the corrective of Carlyle's hero-worship. It is true that genuine greatness is excessively rare; so far Thackeray is right, and he is justified in depicting his world of commonplace beings without a hero. But it is also true that when real greatness is found it is of inestimable importance; so far Carlyle is right. Once or twice in the history of the world, as in the expansion of the Roman republic, we may find "an interregnum of extraordinary deeds and ordinary men." But there are a handful of men who by thought or action or emotion have changed the course of history—Alexander and Cæsar, Aristotle and Newton, Mahomet and Luther. The mere counting of heads is not enough, we must also weigh brains and value character. The omission of the heroic (that, as well as the con-

ventional "hero" of fiction, is excluded from *Vanity Fair*) is the omission of that which is most vital.

Herein then lies the element of truth in these charges. They apply principally to *Vanity Fair* and to the earlier books, though they have some point in reference to the bulk of Thackeray's other work as well. They are especially applicable to *Vanity Fair*, because it is an instance of reaction, and in accordance with the ordinary law, reaction against any excess leads to excess on the other side. Thackeray was greatly under the influence of the eighteenth century writers, and above all of Fielding. *Pamela* produced by reaction *Joseph Andrews*, the sentimentalism of Richardson provoked the realism of his satirist. *Vanity Fair* is not, like *Joseph Andrews*, a satire on any one novel. It is however a satire on romance and on sentiment, a reaction against Scott and Lytton and Dickens all at once. It is a satire at the same time on contemporary society; for though the scene is laid some thirty years back, the teaching is unmistakably applicable to the writer's own time.

Thackeray did not design *Vanity Fair* to be a picture of the world as a whole: it represents a particular phase of society, a special type of men. "What I want is," he writes, "to make a set of people living without God in the world (only that is a cant phrase), greedy, pompous men, perfectly self-satisfied for the most part, and at ease about their superior virtue[1]." Hence the Sedleys, the Osbornes, the Crawleys, Lord Steyne and Becky Sharp. If it were urged that the result is a one-sided view, Thackeray might reply that it was never meant to be anything else. But the reply is not wholly convincing. Probably the end held in view and the method adopted in *Vanity Fair* are faulty; at any rate the method is not that of Shakespeare. Against the treachery of Macbeth he puts the fidelity of Banquo; against the cruelty of Regan and Goneril the love of Cordelia; against the devilishness of Iago the simplicity of heart which makes Othello an easy victim. We do not take an individual to represent society: Barry Lyndon's villainy is his own. But when we find a number of people gathered together by the various chances which bring men into

[1] *Works, with Biographical Introductions*, I. xxxvi.

contact with one another, we naturally suppose that we shall find among them the qualities of the whole. It is not so in *Vanity Fair*. The loyalty and truth of Dobbin are no adequate counterpoise to the heartlessness of George Osborne, the meanness and cowardice of Jos Sedley, the want of moral principle in Rawdon Crawley and the unredeemed vice of Lord Steyne. Moreover, Dobbin is made ridiculous; while, though the vicious characters are depicted as vicious, it is only Jos Sedley against whom the laugh is turned. Among the female characters, again, all the intellect is bestowed upon Becky; Amelia is mild and inane, and her goodness of heart has the limits due to the weakness of such a head.

In *Vanity Fair* Thackeray's compass does not point to polar truth; the repellent influence of realism causes a wide deviation. It is easy however to make allowance for this and to take the book for what it was meant to be. False as a picture of society, it reveals with penetrating truth the inner soul and character of certain items of society. Thackeray's men and women are real. The sordid schemes of the Rawdon Crawley household, the pompous emptiness of the Osbornes, and the viciousness of Steyne can all be paralleled. So can the flash of manhood in the empty-headed but not altogether empty-hearted dragoon, Rawdon Crawley. The triumph of the book is by universal consent the wonderful creation of Becky Sharp. Endowed with plenty of intellect, absolutely unencumbered with moral principle, and placed in a position of dependence, she was bound to develop just the vices she shows. The general conception of the character is fairly easy; what is beyond the reach of ordinary writers is the marvellous cleverness and resource which could only be bestowed by a marvellously clever and resourceful author; for in creative work no one can rise higher than his own best self. No one but Shakespeare has drawn a character so intellectual as Hamlet or so humorous as Falstaff, because no one else possessed the intellect or the humour.

Nemesis several times overtakes Becky: the very success of her own schemes brings repentance. Thackeray is too much of a moralist to be at ease under the triumph of his own scoundrels,

male or female: they usually fail in the long run. But he is too much of an artist to tack on the moral. The failure comes quite naturally, it is unforced, there is no *deus ex machina* to reward virtue and to punish vice. For example, Becky schemes to marry Rawdon Crawley, and succeeds; her punishment comes when she has Sir Pitt Crawley at her feet. Clever as she is, she has been unable to foresee the future. So all the conquests of the brilliant Beatrix Esmond lead only to an unrespected age and a miserable deathbed—the inevitable results of such a life and such a character. Herein Thackeray is far more true to nature, and is a far more profound moralist, than Dickens. With the latter sudden conversions are frequent. The villain readily repents him of his villainy, and the good man is rewarded, not because he has earned the reward, but because he is good. Possibly Dickens followed the Psalmist, who had "not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread"—a rule which seems to admit of exceptions in modern times.

The "novel without a hero" is, then, a commentary, not on society as a whole, but only on certain aspects of it. A point of view is chosen, and everything is selected and arranged with reference to it. The *dramatis personae* are such as suit it; what they say and do is what best illustrates the *vanitas vanitatum* of the preacher. Thackeray frequently speaks of them as his puppets and of himself as the showman who pulls the strings and makes them move. They are not puppets, and behind the mask he is a very serious-faced showman. He is essentially a moralist, a preacher; and the method of his teaching is satirical. It has even been said that he is not properly a novelist at all, but a satirist. Here again we have an exaggeration of a truth. It is true that *Vanity Fair* has not the compact structure which we look for in a novel: it is as destitute of plot as of hero. The author is teacher and satirist, not only in those delightful lectures and asides in which he stops the action in order to comment upon the characters and upon human nature, but in the most rapid action and the most racy dialogue as well. And yet, loose as the structure is, the satire and the teaching would lose their effect if they were detached from it.

Though he was essentially a teacher Thackeray had little to

do with the novel of purpose. He never followed Dickens in his humanitarianism. Circumlocution offices and loathsome prisons and workhouses and schools found no reformer in him. He looked on with a quiet smile, and rather suspected that the reform was being overdone. His aim was simply to represent life, or a certain phase of it, as it truly was, not irradiated by the glow of romance, not brightened by the rose-spectacles of sentiment.

There is a sweep of mind, a massiveness of thought about *Vanity Fair* which convinced all competent judges that a real genius had appeared. "Scott for boys, Thackeray for men, Shakespeare for heroes" was the saying of Samuel Rogers. We may pass over the impertinence to Scott, one of the most manly of men and of writers; it was no more than justice to Thackeray. His books are emphatically books for men; the stamp of a masculine understanding appealing to masculine understandings is on every page of them, and on none more clearly than on *Vanity Fair*. It was not only the product of a great mind, but of a mature mind and of a practised hand. Thackeray was in his thirty-sixth year when it began to appear. Such experience as it is based upon is not rapidly accumulated. *The Book of Snobs*, *The Yellowplush Papers*, even *Barry Lyndon*, had all been preliminary essays and studies in preparation for it. The wealth which Thackeray lavishes upon *Vanity Fair* had been laboriously accumulated in those years of apprenticeship when he had been observing, reflecting, sketching, writing for journals and magazines to provide daily bread for those dependent upon him. This practice told upon the style as well as upon the matter of *Vanity Fair*. It is the style of a highly cultivated man and an experienced writer. It is flexible as well as strong, always adequate, never overcharged, sometimes impassioned and nobly eloquent.

Vanity Fair raised Thackeray to a position of rivalry with Dickens, not in popularity, but in the judgment of critics and of the more cultivated class of readers. The followers of the two writers have always been different, and those of Dickens by far the more numerous. But though *Vanity Fair* did not rival *Pickwick* in circulation, it made its author one of the most prominent writers of his generation. In January 1848 he writes to a friend that he

is "all but at the top of the tree, indeed there, if the truth were known, and having a great fight up there with Dickens[1]." He was no longer a journalist; he was a writer of books, and as such the peer of the best. After *Vanity Fair* came *Pendennis* (1848–1850), which in respect of being partly an autobiography corresponds to the contemporaneous novel of Dickens, *David Copperfield*[2]. Though still loose in construction, *Pendennis* is far more like the orthodox novel than *Vanity Fair*. The characters are not so exclusively chosen to illustrate a thesis; they are representative of a wider range of life. Thackeray had in part reacted against his own reaction. In *Pendennis* he is nearer to romance and less opposed to sentiment than he is in *Vanity Fair*, and he is to that extent less a realist than in the earlier novel. He seems to have felt that his own presentation of life in *Vanity Fair* was at least one-sided and susceptible of misconstruction. Still more is this evident in *Esmond* (1852) and in *The Newcomes* (1853–1855). The change in tone may be due in part to the mellowing influences of time and of success. "Wait till you come to forty year," he himself sings; and time, which tames the passion of youth, also tends to make the judgment more mild, especially when the goal long struggled for has been attained. But another cause is the fact that Thackeray has made his protest. After *Vanity Fair* he is no longer tempted to stand in contrast to his predecessors.

These four novels by general consent stand in the same relation to the rest of Thackeray's works as the four great tragedies do to the other works of Shakespeare; and the common opinion is sound. Thackeray was still in his prime; there was no decline in his intellectual force; but he had put the best of his experience into those books, and he could not again equal them. Few have had the capacity to produce all life long works of the highest class in creative literature. Had Shakespeare himself this capacity? Up to the great tragedies his works are

[1] *Works, with Biographical Introductions*, IX. xlix.

[2] Neither Dickens nor Thackeray confined his self-revelation to one book. A good deal of Thackeray's own life is given in *Philip*, in *The Hoggarty Diamond*, and *The Newcomes* also.

the most marvellous in the world not only for their intrinsic worth, but for the evidence of development they afford. But it cannot be denied that after this there is some decline; and in the last years of his life, silence. Was the silence due solely to the satisfaction of ambition?

Meantime Thackeray had attempted another kind of literary enterprise. His lectures on *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* were first delivered in England in 1851, and afterwards repeated in America in 1852–1853. The lectures on *The Four Georges* were first delivered on his second visit to America, 1855–1856. These two sets of lectures were the most profitable of all his enterprises. In a letter to his mother written in 1859 he says that they had yielded him £9500, *The Virginians* £6000, *Vanity Fair* only £2000[1]. The rate of remuneration is not according to literary value; but nevertheless the two sets of lectures are of very high worth, and are often unduly neglected. They prove that Thackeray was a critic—both moral and literary—of the first rank. Criticism is of the essence of his intellect. His whole work is what Matthew Arnold defined poetry to be, a criticism of life. How penetrating his literary criticism could be is plain from his burlesques and parodies. *Rebecca and Rowena* is perhaps the best burlesque ever penned. Irresistibly amusing as it is, the romance it travesties is left absolutely uninjured. The reader laughs, and returns to *Ivanhoe* with unabated enjoyment. *Phil Fogarty* is likewise excellent; and so is *Codlingsby*, but in a different way. Thackeray loved Scott and he was the friend of Lever. While he laughed at them there was therefore a kindly ring in his laughter. But he distrusted Disraeli and disliked his work; and in *Codlingsby* there is a bitterness which is absent from the other burlesques.

Good burlesque is impossible except through sound criticism, and in these burlesques Thackeray was really criticising his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. It was the same faculty which he employed in his *Humourists of the Eighteenth Century*. But here he was on his chosen and favourite field. The reaction which Thackeray led was a reaction towards the

[1] *Works, with Biographical Introductions*, XI. xv.

eighteenth century. Its lucidity and its respect for the realities of life attracted him. Not only was Fielding his model in the novel, but Hogarth was his model in art; and anyone who has studied the wonderful adaptation of Thackeray's own illustrations to his books will understand how the work of his pencil and the work of his pen interpenetrated one another. There is much also of the spirit of *The Spectator*, grown greater and stronger, in his observations of and satirical and humorous comments on the world around him. By sympathy therefore Thackeray was led to study the eighteenth century systematically. He seriously contemplated writing a history of the reign of Queen Anne. He saturated himself in the literature of the period, how deeply *Esmond* proves. And so in the lectures on the humourists he was pouring out knowledge which he had been accumulating for years. He was criticising from the best standpoint of all, that of sympathy. He shows in *Esmond* that he could speak the speech and think the thoughts of the eighteenth century writers. Thus, standing at a distance which enabled him to see things in their true proportions, and yet possessing something comparable to the familiar knowledge of a contemporary, Thackeray had, in respect of these writers, an unequalled equipment for criticism. And, though they have been strangely depreciated, his lectures on the humourists are among the richest and best criticisms in the language. No one else has so penetrated the spirit of Addison and Steele. His Hogarth is admirable. He disliked Swift; yet who has done more justice to Swift's wonderful genius? who has drawn a more memorable picture of the man?

In *The Four Georges* Thackeray's criticism was not literary, but moral, a species even more familiar to him than the former. The puppets here are the puppets of another *Vanity Fair*, only they happen to be seated on a throne. Thackeray's comments in the lectures are exactly in the spirit of the novel; there is the same satiric touch, the same undertone of pathos. Some of his best writing is to be found in these two sets of lectures.

The Virginians (1857–1859) was Thackeray's next novel after *Esmond*, of which it is a continuation. It was Thackeray's way to link his stories one to another by references to characters or by

their casual appearance; but no other pair of his stories are so intimately related to one another as those two. *The Virginians* has lost a good deal of the charm of its predecessor. The second part of *Robinson Crusoe* is a classical example of the danger an author incurs in handling a second time a theme in which he has been greatly successful. In Thackeray's case the descent is less steep, but it is still great.

In 1859, following the example set by Dickens nine years before, Thackeray undertook the charge of a new periodical, *The Cornhill Magazine*. In it his latest works were published. *Lovel the Widower* (1860) was a version from the unsuccessful play *The Wolves and the Lamb*. *The Adventures of Philip* (1861–1862) is generally regarded as a failure; and so it is as a whole, in comparison with Thackeray's greater novels; but there are some very fine passages in it. More valuable than either are the delicious *Roundabout Papers*, the best of all revelations of Thackeray's own genial, kindly, sympathetic nature. Some incident of travel, an occurrence in the street, a meeting with a friend, the death of a great contemporary, a mere chalk-mark on a door, may be the text. The last of all is the generously indignant vindication of a great man from a suspicion which could only occur to a pitiably little one. But whatever it is the subject is handled with unfailing grace and skill and with penetrating insight. None of these papers are more delightful than those which most reveal the writer; probably the best known of all is that which treats of the thorns in the editorial cushion. They were very sharp thorns to the sensitive novelist, but the cushion with its thorns passed to another somewhat more than a year and a half before Thackeray's sudden death on the Christmas Eve of 1863. He left incomplete the story of *Denis Duval*.

Thackeray said that no one ought to write a novel after fifty. As he died at fifty-two we cannot judge whether he would have disproved this *dictum* by his own example or not. There are good judges who think that *Denis Duval* promised to be among the best of his works. Dickens wrote of it: "In respect of earnest feeling, far-seeing purpose, character, incident, and a certain loving picturesqueness blending the whole, I believe it to be much the

best of all his works[1]." But *Denis Duval* remains a fragment; and what is certain is that among Thackeray's completed works all the best were produced between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five. As has been already hinted, the three novels which with *Vanity Fair* form the great quartet, differ considerably from that first great product of Thackeray's genius. *Pendennis* has a hero. He is not of very heroic proportions; but he is a centre towards which all the threads of the story converge. The book gives an admirable picture of a young man of the nineteenth century, ambitious, talented, well-educated, but withal self-indulgent and infirm of purpose. The good impulses as well as the vanity and the weaknesses of Arthur Pendennis, and the manliness of George Warrington, as well as the imprudence which has marred his life, are all fairly brought before the reader. The impression of the world is far more favourable than that left by the Sedleys, the Osbornes and the Crawleys. The emptiness of social ambitions is satirised again; but there is a kindly side to Major Pendennis which makes his worldliness half attractive. There is nothing in *Pendennis* so fierce as the satire on Lord Steyne, no character so heartless and unprincipled as Becky Sharp. Helen and Laura Pendennis are of a much higher type than the "good" woman of *Vanity Fair*, Amelia.

Much the same is true of *The Newcomes*. It has more in common with *Pendennis* than anything else of Thackeray's: his admirers generally class the two together, and give preference to one or to the other according to personal predilections. In *The Newcomes* as in *Pendennis* we have a world of mingled good and evil, but in the former the extremes are greater. In *Pendennis* there is no character so entirely lovable and attractive as Colonel Newcome, and on the contrary there is none so bad as the Campaigner. So it is also with the scenes of the book. *Pendennis* contains nothing equal to the best parts of *The Newcomes*, but on the whole it is of a more even excellence.

In *Esmond*, the novel intermediate in chronological order between those two, Thackeray adopted a wholly different method; and in it we see most clearly how far he had drifted back from his

[1] *Works, with Biographical Introductions*, XII. xxx, note.

own position in *Vanity Fair* towards that of the romancers. In the first place, *Esmond* is a historical novel. Now a historical setting is unfavourable to realistic treatment, because the minuteness and familiarity of knowledge which the realist requires are attainable only in respect of contemporary society. Further, the very strangeness of the costumes and the manners adds an element of the quaint and of the picturesque which is favourable to romance and prejudicial to realism. If the swords and wigs of the age of Queen Anne are not intrinsically more "romantic" than the frock-coats and trousers of modern times, at least we can more easily regard them in the romantic spirit. Whether he foresaw it at the start or not, Thackeray evidently came to feel this, and *Esmond* is far more akin to the romantic spirit than anything he had previously written. The grand chivalrousness of Henry Esmond—the loftiest character Thackeray ever drew—is, we may hope, no less real than the sordid selfishness and cowardice of Jos Sedley; but it is also what we call "romantic." So too there is romance in the death of the old Lord Castlewood, in the character of young Frank Castlewood, and in the episode of the old Pretender. The two principal female characters are among the best Thackeray ever drew. Lady Castlewood, liable though she is to a mad passion of jealousy, and capable under its influence of gross injustice, is nevertheless a noble woman. Beatrix is, next to Becky Sharp, the cleverest of all Thackeray's women, and she has a fascination which Becky lacked. The palm of wickedness must be given to the earlier creation, though the later one as years go on follows her hard.

In *Esmond* Thackeray undoubtedly felt the influence of Scott more deeply than he had felt it before. But he handled his historical materials in a different way, and his novel reproduces the age it depicts with a minuteness and fidelity in style and tone and substance such as Scott never attempts and nowhere rivals. Thackeray's success in this respect is marvellous. Perhaps on the whole *Esmond* is written with a more sustained excellence of style than any of his other books; and the triumph seems all the greater when we bear in mind that this style was not his own, but the imitated style of an age long past.

On the part of Thackeray *Esmond* was no mere chance excursion into the field of history. It was a new development of his work which was not only significant of much, but which promised to be permanent. *The Virginians* is also historical. So is the fragment, *Denis Duval*; and so was the other subject which he thought about and talked about to his family, but which he did not live to treat[1]. The scene was to have been laid in the days of Henry V, and Thackeray read for it Froissart and Brantôme and Monstrelet. We may reasonably conjecture that this subject would have produced a novel more romantic than anything he had yet written; and it seems also reasonable to see in this growth of the romantic element a partial abandonment of the canons of art with which he started. To some extent, perhaps, necessity determined his choice. The field he had originally chosen was not very wide. He was the painter of the upper middle and the upper classes; while Dickens was the painter of the lower middle and working classes. But the latter are not only far more numerous than the former, their occupations are also far more various. Dickens could find odd trades and occupations almost without number, and they served to impart variety to his stories; Thackeray had only a few professions to draw upon, and there was danger of at least a superficial sameness. The mere need of fresh subjects therefore impelled Thackeray towards history. But there was a change in his own spirit as well. Two inferences may reasonably be drawn from the facts of his career. In the first place, it has been seen that he started with an alienation from romance produced by the excesses of the romanticists; and in reaction from those excesses he determined that he would devote himself to reality. His parodies as well as his more serious work point to this conclusion. In the second place, he fell into the error of taking for reality that which is opposite to romance. The chivalrous knight who counted all things dross except love and manly honour was a delusion; but the greedy noble who sought to extort wealth by the extraction of the Jews' grinders was real. Hence the preponderance through the first half of Thackeray's career of what was hard and unlovely. But

[1] *Works, with Biographical Introductions*, XII. xxiv.

gradually, as time went on, he recovered his balance. He discovered that romance was not so much false as one-sided and partial, and that its opposite might be equally one-sided and at the same time less beautiful. The kindlier judgment and the more genial views which pervade his later work indicate his mature conviction that the chivalrous knight and the greedy noble were equally real. It had been his task to lay stress upon an aspect of truth which had been previously neglected, but it was not to be desired that that aspect should be in turn treated as the whole truth.

It may be permissible for once to violate chronology in order to notice along with Thackeray his latest and most devoted disciple, George du Maurier (1834–1896), whose *Trilby* (1894), in its earlier part, contains more of the master's spirit than anything else in literature. This was Du Maurier's single literary success. Neither *Peter Ibbetson* (1891) before it, nor *The Martian* (1897) after it, showed equal merit; and it is questionable whether Du Maurier could ever have done the like again. For into *Trilby* he had put his own experience as an artist and the best of his observation of the artist character. The consequence is that the first part of the book is so excellent that, if it had kept the same level to the end, it would have stood not very much below Thackeray's own work. Unfortunately there is a great decline from the introduction of the hypnotic influence onwards. The truth is that in Du Maurier we have a Thackeray with powers most singularly inverted. There was in both the same combination of the artist and the man of letters. But just as in Thackeray the artist was obstructed by some strange disability, so in Du Maurier was the man of letters. The former therefore belongs to the history of literature, the latter to the history of art. Just as Thackeray's illustrations, worked out with the skill of Du Maurier, would have been great, so, though in a minor degree, would the literary conceptions of Du Maurier touched by the pen of Thackeray.

CHAPTER III

THE WOMEN NOVELISTS

"'I AM a great novel reader,' said Guizot, 'but I seldom read German or French novels. The characters are too artificial. There are too many forced situations, and the morality is generally detestable. My delight is to read English novels, particularly those written by women. *C'est toute une école de morale.* Miss Austen, Miss Ferrier, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Mrs Gaskell, and many others almost as remarkable, form a school which in the excellence, the profusion, and the contemporaneousness of its productions, resembles the cloud of dramatic poets of the great Athenian age.[1]'" The words of the great Frenchman are not only a testimony to the excellence of the English novel, but also a reminder that the question of sex may occasionally be relevant in literary criticism. The development of prose-fiction called into existence a class of female writers, which gained stability from the growth of a more liberal public opinion with regard to the position and functions of women. Fanny Burney, Mrs Radcliffe, Miss Austen, Miss Edgeworth, Jane Porter, Lady Morgan, Mrs Inchbald, Mary Shelley, Mrs Opie and others flourished towards the close of the eighteenth century or in the early years of the nineteenth. Some of them sheltered themselves under the veil of anonymity; but on the whole the pioneers found that the barriers in front of them were less formidable than they appeared. The fool might say with his lips as well as in his heart that these women had "unsexed"

[1] N. W. Senior's *Conversations with Thiers*, &c., ii. 395.

themselves; but Johnson and Burke praised Miss Burney with lavish generosity, and Scott exhausted the language of panegyric on behalf of Miss Edgeworth and Miss Austen, while he made Miss Ferrier one of the chosen friends of his declining years. The powers so long unnaturally pent up at last had their vent, and women more and more plied the pen until, in the sphere of fiction, they came to rival in quality as well as in volume the work of men. Of no other form of literature can as much be said. There is no English poetess whom any responsible critic would rank with Keats or Shelley, to say nothing of Shakespeare and Milton; but in the delineation of character Miss Austen has been pronounced the inferior only of Shakespeare, and Edmond Scherer regarded George Eliot as the greatest of English novelists.

Some of the women who wrote novels are more noteworthy for their work in other departments of literature. The name of Mary Russell Mitford (1786–1855) will live, not by reason of her novels or her dramas, but for the sake of *Our Village*. Harriet Martineau is more memorable for her gallant battle for freedom of opinion and as the translator and condenser of Comte, than for her stories. Caroline Clive's poems are of finer quality than her *Paul Ferroll*, good as that is. Of the rest, many must be passed over without notice, and others must be dismissed with the most cursory mention. No other form of literature necessitates such rigorous selection as fiction; in none is the revival of forgotten or fading names so futile; nowhere else is there such a pile of literary lumber. The torch of the Caliph Omar, if it could be applied with a little more discrimination than, according to the legend, it was applied to the library of Alexandria, would do a service to mankind.

Anna Elizabeth Bray (1789–1883), a fluent and facile writer of books of topography and history, of historical romances and of what she herself describes as "local novels," may be mentioned in passing because of the excitement once aroused by her story, *The Protestant*. The subject was suggested to Mrs Bray's mind by Fox's *Book of Martyrs*; and after the fashion of the followers of Scott she diligently prepared herself for the task by a course

of reading, of which she does not appear to have possessed even the rudiments beforehand. Her purpose was simply to illustrate the sufferings and the faith of the martyrs of Queen Mary's persecution; but the enterprising publisher, Colburn, thought he might make capital out of the political situation by advertising it as a book written with a view to the question of Catholic emancipation. The bait took: the book was reviled—but it sold. A curious illustration of the movement of thought and the changes which come over the meanings of words is the fact that, just because it was supposed to be written in order to prevent Catholic emancipation, it was then spoken of as "the production of a high churchman's lady," and that in recent years it has been in all innocence described as a book written in what we now call the High Church spirit. A better representative of the High Church position, in that sense, would be Lady G. Fullerton (1812–1885), who in *Ellen Middleton* (1844) presented the case in a manner suitable for adults, and Elizabeth Sewell (sister of that tutor of Exeter College who burned Froude's *Nemesis of Faith*), whose *Amy Herbert* (1844) was meant to perform the same service for the young. Catherine Gore (1799–1861) was, about the same time, the leader in the novel of fashion; but she too, like many of the women and several of the men, spoilt her work by excessive rapidity of composition. They had the example of Scott before them (Mrs Bray surpassed even him, writing one three-volume novel—in the rough—in six weeks); but they had not Scott's wealth of ideas and fulness of knowledge to work upon. Mrs Marsh wrote with greater care, and her *Two Old Men's Tales* is more readable than the majority of such half-forgotten stories; but her writings have not such qualities of style, characterisation or plot, as would entitle them to a permanent place in literature. Frances Trollope (1780–1863) too showed by her voluminousness whence her son Anthony derived his wonderful facility. Her career was an uncommon and, to herself, a most honourable one. Up to the age of fifty she had written nothing. Then, as she found her husband's affairs steadily going from bad to worse, she tried literature as a means of livelihood. She had gone to America in 1827, and it occurred to her that she might make a book out of her experiences there. The result

was *The Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832). There is not much fire in Mrs Trollope's novels, but by this book she unfortunately produced a good deal of heat in the feelings of two nations towards one another. The Americans of those days were unwholesomely sensitive to foreign, and especially to English, criticism; and Mrs Trollope's superficial book was blameworthy for its want of tact and good feeling. Yet it was effective in more ways than one. It brought the money the Trollope household sorely needed; and the pungent criticisms went home so well that it is said vulgar fellows were often shamed into good behaviour with the cry of "Trollope, Trollope." Afterwards she wrote several books of travel and many novels, being responsible, between 1832 and 1857, for more than one hundred volumes.

It was not however writers of this class of whom Guizot was thinking when he paid his emphatic compliment to the women novelists of England; and, however harmless in substance and innocent in intention might be the works of Mrs Trollope, Mrs Gore and Mrs Bray, he would hardly have called them "une école de morale." The phrase implies not merely harmlessness, but a force and depth which are sometimes spoken of as masculine, but which are characteristic also of the three writers of the Victorian era whom he names—Charlotte Brontë, Mrs Gaskell and George Eliot. It is accordingly they who have to be seriously considered and critically examined.

The Brontës belong to that class of writers whom it is impossible to understand except through the medium of biography. The conjunction of intense feeling with a narrow range of experience explains their frequent violence and excess. Give a quantity of gunpowder ample space, and it may be exploded with little danger; confine it, and it will rend the solid rock to pieces. So a fervid imagination and a vast capacity for wrath, operating upon the cabined lives of the Brontës, produced *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. "The action is laid in hell," said Dante Rossetti of the latter novel, "only it seems places and people have English names there[1]." It was really a picture of the places

[1] *Letters to Allingham.*

and people Emily Brontë had known, rendered terrible by her sombre imagination. Heathcliff himself was a transcript from life, though we may hope that he was a little darker than the original.

It would be out of place here to enter into the minutiae or to discuss the numerous doubtful points of Brontë biography; in most respects Mrs Gaskell's beautiful life of her friend Charlotte Brontë is sufficient for the purpose. We have to learn elsewhere that the novelist's father was born to the name of Brunty, the original of which was probably O'Prunty, and that he softened it to Brontë, a form which seems to have been suggested by the title conferred by the King of Naples upon Nelson. It is not worth entering into the dubious romance of the Brontë genealogy; but their Irish origin should all the more carefully be borne in mind because they are singularly un-Irish alike in merits and in defects. The secret is partly the same as that which explains the cases of Swift and several other great Irishmen. Patrick Brontë married an English wife (from the Celtic county of Cornwall, however). In still greater degree, probably, it is to be found in the tendency, which man shares with some of the inferior animals, to take colour from the surroundings. Though not of Yorkshire blood, the Brontës show not a little of the character of Northern England.

Patrick Brontë was a man of forty-three and was the father of six children when, in 1820, he removed to Haworth as its incumbent. He was also himself a writer and a poet, though, but for his greater daughters, his name would have been long since forgotten. Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855) was then not quite four years old, and her two sisters were both junior to herself. The place to which they now moved remained their home to the end of their lives, and its mark is stamped deep upon their writings. The scenery of Haworth, its atmosphere, the character of its inhabitants and the stories current among and about them, have all gone to the making of the Brontë novels. In the case of Emily the attachment was a passion: she could hardly live away from Haworth; she never left it without suffering in health; and some of the most impressive lines of her powerfully imaginative poetry

bear witness to the strong hold its wild hills and moors had upon her:—

> "What have these lonely mountains worth revealing?
> More glory and more grief than I can tell.
> The earth that wakes *one* human heart to feeling
> Can centre both the worlds of heaven and hell."

The whole Brontë family was literary, and all the children who grew to maturity followed in the footsteps of their father, the author of *College Poems* (1811) and of the *Rural Minstrel* (1813). Patrick Branwell Brontë, the only son, who had been the pride and hope of the family, lived to be its shame. The truth seems to be that, though he had a certain amount of talent, he was no more the equal of his sisters in intellect than he was in character. Mrs Gaskell was impressed by his writings, and the fragments of his composition which she quotes give some support to her favourable judgment; but it is hardly borne out by the fuller relics preserved by Leyland. The three sisters all left works by which they can with some confidence be judged.

Poverty narrowed the education of the Brontës and brought them many a bitter grief. Probably they suffered little, if at all, from the fact that in their early years they were taught at home by their father: as Charlotte was only eight when she and her sisters passed out of his care, the younger children at least can hardly have been much influenced either for good or for evil. In 1824 they were sent to that school at Cowan Bridge, chosen not for its excellence but for its cheapness, to which the genius of Charlotte Brontë has given a place among schools for girls, similar to that held by Dotheboys Hall among places of education for boys. It is depicted in *Jane Eyre*; the hapless Helen Burns is Charlotte's sister Maria; and Miss Temple and Miss Scatcherd are also drawn from the life. Less than a year after they had joined this school the two eldest Brontës died, and towards the close of 1825 Charlotte and Emily were withdrawn from it. A second and a much happier experience of school life was afterwards embodied in *Shirley*. The stories on which were founded the character of Moore and the rising of the Luddites were told by the mistress of the Roe Head school, Miss Wooler. It is re-

markable that each of the three main stages of Charlotte Brontë's chequered education furnished her with material for a book. The third stage was taken at Brussels, whither she and Emily went to perfect themselves in French and in this way to qualify themselves for the work of teaching, by which they hoped to win their bread. Much of the history of this stage may be read in *Villette*, as well as in *The Professor*, a work of earlier composition, and a cruder one. The fact that so much was made out of the incidents of her own limited education shows what must have been the strength of an imagination which could build so splendidly on a slight foundation; but as the slender materials of her experience were nearly exhausted when she died, it must remain questionable whether length of days would have enabled Charlotte Brontë to increase greatly her contribution to literature. She showed no taste for the historical novel (unless her girlish writings about her hero, the Duke of Wellington, are evidence of such a taste), and her best characters are delineations from life.

The Brussels episode took place in 1842, and Charlotte also spent 1843 there. She had already made several experiments in teaching; but as they were not very successful, and as the conduct of Branwell Brontë upset the project of turning the parsonage into a school, the sisters gradually drifted into literature instead. It was the work for which they were best fitted, as well as that which they did with the greatest love. The accidental reading of Emily's verses by Charlotte led to the publication of the *Poems* (1846) by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. After a year the publishers had disposed of only two copies[1]. Success is not a conclusive proof of merit, nor failure of the absence of it; but it is plain that only one of the three sisters, Emily, was a poet; or perhaps—for there is much that is poetic in the prose of Charlotte—it would be more fair to say that she alone had the gift of expressing herself in verse.

The three sisters had already written each a novel before the modest little volume of poems appeared. Charlotte's story, *The Professor*, failed to find a publisher; but *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* were accepted. There was however a long delay

[1] Shorter's *The Brontës*, i. 329.

before they appeared; and in the meantime *Jane Eyre* had been written and published, and had taken the world by storm. This work by the unknown Currer Bell was issued in October, 1847, and early in December, says Mrs Gaskell, the rush for copies began. Its success was due to the spontaneous appreciation of readers rather than to critical approbation.

The romance, the passionate intensity, the transparent sincerity and the fresh, powerful, often poetic style of *Jane Eyre*, were the qualities which won, as they deserved, success. The publishers to whom *The Professor* was first offered had objected to it on the score of its deficiency in excitement and incident; and the authoress, with characteristic good sense, had resolved that her next work should not be open to this criticism. Accordingly *Jane Eyre* is as far removed as possible from the domesticity of Miss Austen, or Miss Ferrier, or Miss Mitford. It is the wedding of romance to realism. But the realism is absolutely unlike that of Miss Austen, and the romance has small affinity to that of Scott. It is the realism, not of the quiet English country mansion, but of a land stretching close up to the gates of the region wherein the scene of *Wuthering Heights* is laid; and it is the romance, not of the knight in armour, with strong hand and high heart, and the queen of beauty bestowing the crown for valour, but of elemental human nature.

According to the prevalent conception, romance might well have seemed to be something altogether beyond the reach of a young woman with the mental gifts, training and experience of Charlotte Brontë. To ask her to be romantic, or to furnish "startling incident" and "thrilling excitement," was like demanding bricks without straw. The comprehensive imagination of a Scott, playing upon the great facts of national life, or the visionary idealism of a Shelley, beholding all the sufferings of humanity in the person of Prometheus chained to his rock—these easily gave birth to romance. But Charlotte Brontë neither had that comprehensive imagination, nor the wide knowledge which supplied it with material, nor, on the other hand, the visionary idealism of the poet. Her realm was all irradiated by the light of a vivid imagination; but the light played only upon what she

herself had seen and heard and known; she could not create out of airy nothing.

On the other hand, her prospect in the sphere of realism seemed hardly more hopeful; for her knowledge of reality was probably the most limited that has ever sufficed for a great genius. Even greater geniuses, like Burns, have been hampered by poverty and shut out from many advantages. But Burns came into the closest contact with life at a thousand points. He had the liberty of manhood, and the very lowliness of his position helped him to see humanity naked and undisguised; while the Brontë girls could only gaze at it through the vicarage windows. It is the special glory of Charlotte Brontë that out of her extremely limited material she made a novel at once intensely romantic and profoundly real. She did so by making her own the spirit which inspires her sister's lines quoted above. The passions of humanity, she knew, were capable of creating both the worlds of heaven and hell. Though she could only look through the windows, she had a light within which made the glance a revelation. Limited as her experience was, it showed her the human heart; and out of that what might not be made? "Ay, ay," said Scott once in the hearing of Lockhart, "if one could look into the heart of that little cluster of cottages, no fear but you would find material enough for tragedy as well as comedy. I undertake to say there is some real romance at this moment going on down there, that, if it could have justice done to it, it would be well worth all the fiction that was ever spun out of human brains[1]."

Charlotte Brontë accepted her limitations and she faced her difficulties, and even exaggerated them in a spirit bordering upon defiance. She makes her heroine a governess, poor, plain and small, like herself,—to prove to her sisters, as St Paul had long ago proved to the world, how unimportant a mean presence is, if the spirit within be great. This poor little governess lives in a lonely house and meets only a handful of human beings; and yet from these unpromising elements there grows a romance which enthralled men of the world like Thackeray and George Henry Lewes and Lockhart.

[1] *Life of Scott*, v. 285.

The materials are scanty, but it is interesting to note how thriftily they are used. Charlotte Brontë says that Jane Eyre is not herself except in bodily appearance; but notwithstanding this denial, in the feelings of the governess and in the events of her life there is much of her own experience. The position of Rochester, the husband of a mad wife, who has persuaded himself that because of that madness he is at liberty to marry again, is a transcript of a case which had become known to Miss Brontë at Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head. There is little in her writings, and scarcely anything that is good, which cannot be traced back to a source in her own experience. She was herself quite aware that she could work only upon that, and saw clearly the limitation it put to her productiveness. "I mean to observe your warning," she writes to G. H. Lewes, "about being careful how I undertake new works; my stock of material is not abundant, but very slender; and, besides, neither my experience, my acquirements, nor my powers, are sufficiently varied to justify my ever becoming a frequent writer[1]."

Even genius could not preserve from error a writer whose range of experience was so narrow. The characteristic defects of all the Brontë novels are clearly traceable to this one cause. The girls had lived among a race of rude and hard and violent men; the legends current in the district were of a nature befitting such men; and if there is any reality at all under the romance of the Brontës in Ireland, theirs was a tale of violence and brutality. The lives of the girls had been hard, cheerless and full of suffering. They knew the sting of poverty and had felt the oppression of petty tyranny. They had seen the lives of those they held dear sacrificed to cruelty and greed. To them therefore men like Rochester, and even Heathcliff and Earnshaw, seemed scarcely abnormal. Heathcliff himself is not very much more brutal than that masterpiece of R. L. Stevenson's portraiture, Weir of Hermiston, who is no mere creature of the imagination, but a being who was once clothed with flesh and blood. What is against nature is the space such characters fill in the works of the Brontës and the proportion

[1] Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ii. 52.

they bear to others. R. L. Stevenson not only draws Alan Breck, conceited, cheerful, faithful, fearless, as well as the gloomy, stern and vindictive Hermiston; but he relieves the character of the latter by showing the greatness of the judge and his inflexible integrity in his high office. The Brontës lacked the materials for such a contrast and were not aware of the need of such relief.

Charlotte Brontë, it may be repeated, was not a poet; but yet her prose is charged with the spirit of poetry, just as is that of Carlyle, who was equally incapable of writing verse. Nothing in her writings fascinates the reader more than those passages of vivid insight into character, or those descriptions of natural scenery—especially scenes of tempest—which glitter in her pages with a flash as of a diamond. A special manifestation of this power may be found in her descriptions in *Jane Eyre* of imaginary pictures, which show that she had the spirit, though not the technical skill, of one of the greatest of painters:—

"These pictures were in water colours. The first represented clouds low and livid, rolling over a swollen sea: all the distance was in eclipse; so, too, was the foreground; or, rather, the nearest billows, for there was no land. One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam: its beak held a gold bracelet, set with gems, that I had touched with as brilliant tints as my palette could yield, and as glittering distinctness as my pencil could impart. Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corpse glanced through the green water; a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn."

The writer of this passage had the mind and eye of a painter, and she had other artistic gifts as well. The wonderful description of acting in *Villette* suggests that, had she chosen, and had circumstances favoured her, she might have been one of the greatest of actresses.

Charlotte Brontë's greatest defect, the want of humour, must be put down to the account of nature rather than circumstance. She is always desperately in earnest, she has no lightness of touch,

she cannot believe that there are occasions when a smile is more effective than a sermon and a jest more crushing than a blow. And not only was she deficient in humour herself, but she was incapable of appreciating it or any of the kindred qualities in others. She admired Thackeray as much as she admired any living man, except the Duke of Wellington. She held that it lay with himself whether he should be really, what some critics called him, only the second of living writers, or the first. And yet she never fully understood him, and was impatient with him because he was not always serious enough and direct enough for her taste. This lack of humour affords a ground more grave than any other for doubting the permanence of her fame. With few exceptions they whom the world has chosen to remember have been gifted with it; but Milton is among the exceptions.

The success of *Jane Eyre* fixed the career of Charlotte Brontë. There was no more need to scheme about a school or to sacrifice home for the trying lot of a governess, for she could certainly make more by her pen. At the same time, she had experienced the tribulations as well as the triumphs of an author, and had been especially pained by a scandalous article in *The Quarterly Review*, which not merely condemned the book, but reflected upon the character of the writer. Her only answer was to put in the mouth of a vulgar woman in *Shirley* some of the most objectionable of the reviewer's sentences. But though such articles might give pain, they did little to check the success of the author of *Jane Eyre*. She immediately began *Shirley*, which however was not published till two years after the appearance of the former work. In the interval Charlotte Brontë had passed several "black milestones" on the road of life. Her brother Branwell, and her two sisters, Emily and Anne (1820–1849), were now all dead; and except for her father she was left absolutely alone.

Shirley is even more full of local colour than *Jane Eyre*; for, though the scene was laid a generation back, the actors in it were nearly all persons the writer had known. It is characteristic of her method that, even in such a trifle as his half-foreign blood, her Moore is identical with the Cartwright who was the real

hero of the Luddite story which first set her imagination to work. The Yorkes were real, the three curates were real, Mr Hall was real, Shirley Keildar was her own sister Emily. Her strict fidelity to fact led to the discovery of the secret of authorship. A Haworth man who had migrated to Liverpool made sure of the locality of the author, and then by a process of exhaustion concluded that it could be no one but Miss Brontë.

Experience had taught Charlotte Brontë a good deal; for her style is more mature, and she is more varied and less violent in the later novel. She is no less intense and earnest; indeed there are passages in the latter part of *Shirley* which seem to be written in her own blood. The tragical history of those two years had left its mark. The death of Branwell Brontë was a relief, though a sad one; but when first the stern and lofty Emily and next the gentle Anne departed, Charlotte was lonely indeed. "The two human beings who understood me, and whom I understood, are gone[1]," she writes. Anne died meekly, leaving as her farewell to the world the verses beginning, "I hoped that with the brave and strong"; but the day of Emily's death "was very terrible. She was torn, conscious, panting, reluctant, though resolute, out of a happy life[2]." No wonder that the surviving sister adds emphatically, "It *will not do* to dwell on these things." No wonder that, nevertheless, they are for ever recurring to her memory, and that they lend their sombre tone to the part of *Shirley* which was written after the losses had been borne, and even to the earlier part, over which the shadows of coming events are already cast.

But nevertheless, living as it is, and full as it is of the writer's personality, *Shirley* is not fused into unity by her imagination as *Jane Eyre* is. It remains a collection of scenes and sketches of character, all real, all from the life, but not inevitably there, not integral parts of a whole, as are the scenes and characters of the earlier book. Even the slight distance in time and the trifling demand on the historic imagination had a damaging effect. Charlotte Brontë did not like that sort of work, and she did not do it well. "I wish he could be told not to care much for dwelling on the

[1] Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ii. 121. [2] *ibid.* ii. 100.

political and religious intrigues of the times," is her comment on Thackeray's handling of history in *Esmond*: it contained, in her opinion, "too much history, too little story[1]." The true secret however of the inferiority of *Shirley* is the absence of the little governess. The thing Charlotte Brontë could do supremely well was "spiritual autobiography"; and in *Jane Eyre* there is far more of that than she herself was aware, or would acknowledge.

Her life was drawing near its close before her third novel, *Villette* (1853), appeared. Meanwhile, in 1850, she had written the admirable biographical notice of her sisters which was prefixed to a new edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*. The intense loneliness was telling on her, and the gloom of that desolate parsonage which suggested to the stranger's mind that joy could never have entered it since it was first built. Ill health delayed the composition of *Villette*; and after it appeared the pleasure of success was dashed, as it had been in each of the former cases, by the intrusion of the question of sex in authorship. In the case of *Jane Eyre*, this question had been brought in by Miss Rigby in *The Quarterly Review*, and in that of *Shirley* by G. H. Lewes in *The Edinburgh*; while in the case of *Villette* the blow was struck by the author's friend Miss Martineau, who pronounced it coarse. It is only just to say that in thus stating her opinion she was fulfilling a promise; but the condemnation was none the less painful.

Just before this a promise of happiness had come to Charlotte Brontë, only to be taken away by the unreasonable opposition of her father. Mr Nicholls, his curate (not one of those satirised in *Shirley*, though he is mentioned there under the name of Mr McCarthy), proposed marriage to her, and she, who had refused several proposals from other men, consented. But the violence of her father, combined with the feeling due to the infirmities of age, caused the project of marriage to be abandoned. Ultimately however Patrick Brontë's opposition was withdrawn, and in June, 1854, Charlotte became Mrs Nicholls. On March 31st, 1855, she died. Her last year was happy. As her life was ebbing

[1] Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ii. 263.

out she "caught the sound of some murmured words of prayer that God would spare her. 'Oh!' she whispered forth, 'I am not going to die, am I? He will not separate us, we have been so happy[1].'"

Her literary remains were gathered up after her death. What had been rejected in her life was precious now as the work of the renowned novelist, and *The Professor* was accordingly published in 1857. The story upon which she was engaged at her death appeared also as a fragment, *Emma*, in *The Cornhill Magazine* for April, 1860. But Charlotte Brontë (she can no more become Mrs Nicholls than Francis Bacon could be lost in Lord Verulam) is a woman of three books; and the only one which requires notice in addition to those which have been already discussed is *Villette*. In merit it may be placed intermediate between the other two—a more compact whole than *Shirley*, less inspired than *Jane Eyre*. Here again the effects of the autobiographic method are visible, for to a large extent *Villette* is autobiographical; less so indeed than *Jane Eyre*, but much more so than *Shirley*. It is the spiritual autobiography of the Brussels period. Charlotte Brontë is not to be identified with any of the characters in the book; but nevertheless her thoughts and many of her experiences are unquestionably there. For instance, the scene in the confessional is a piece of her own experience. The characters too, especially the mistress of the boarding-school and her remarkable professor, are portraits.

The charges of coarseness which were freely brought against Charlotte Brontë by contemporaries seem to us now exaggerated and strained. It is true, her characters do not all wear kid gloves, eat with silver forks, or act with the grace and speak with the decorum of the caste of Vere de Vere. She was unflinchingly sincere, and whatever of coarseness there may be in her works comes from her photographic fidelity to the life she knew, and was no part of the fibre of her mind. Among the men and women of her acquaintance it was the custom to speak plainly and to call a spade a spade. The display of uncurbed passion was familiar to her; and hence she frequently depicted her

[1] Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ii. 324.

characters as saying words and doing deeds which to some of her readers seemed unnecessarily coarse, brutal and cruel. Even if the words and the deeds were so, the tendency of the books was always towards a higher purpose and a sterner morality. Charlotte Brontë had no love for garbage, but she had a profound reverence for truth, and her daring mind disposed her to risk everything in its service. All the more on that account is she an efficient teacher in the school of morals of English fiction. No pure mind was ever contaminated by her works, but the weak have been strengthened and the timorous encouraged.

Like her great contemporary George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë had in her much that in common parlance is spoken of as masculine; but far more than George Eliot she shows at the same time the characteristics of women. It is easy to understand the doubt which was felt as to the sex of the anonymous writer of the *Scenes of Clerical Life*, and even to sympathise with the general view that the author must be a man; but such doubt in the case of *Jane Eyre* could only indicate shallowness of criticism. Charlotte Brontë's pictures of men show the same sort of defects as women find in the portraits of women drawn by men. Rochester could never have been the hero in any novel written by a man, and very few of her masculine characters carry the conviction of truth. On the other hand, it would scarcely have been possible for anyone but a woman—unless a new Shakespeare had appeared—to draw such a character as Jane Eyre, or even Lucy Snowe. For this reason alone, if there had been no other, there was room for the growing class of female writers; and for this reason those who, like Charlotte Brontë, have done their work faithfully and well have a claim upon the gratitude of their country. Those very differences of character, temperament and endowment, which have been so often advanced as reasons why women should confine themselves to domestic life, are so many reasons the more why some women should be poets and novelists. As "it takes all sorts of people to make a world," so it needs all sorts of gifts to make a round and harmonious literature. The fact that domestic work must always be the primary and the most essential work of women proves nothing. It is equally true that agriculture

is the primary and most essential work of men; but it does not follow that every man must be a farmer.

All that has been said in adverse criticism of Charlotte Brontë might be said with much greater force of her sister Emily (1818–1848); and all that can be said in extenuation and excuse applies to her likewise with greater force. She died at thirty; she had seen less of the world than even Charlotte; her excessive reserve confined her still more narrowly within the narrow circle that was open to her; and finally, her own nature was more unyielding and had closer kinship with the harsh natures around her than her sister's. Her character was rather repellent than attractive; but yet it won the unstinted love and devotion of her sister. And however little Emily might be loved, hers was a nature that commanded respect. Her pride was morbid: it is painful to read how in her last illness even her sisters dared not notice her failing step and laboured breathing and her frequent pauses as she climbed the staircase. But this pride, when it took the form of courage, was magnificent. An incident recorded in *Shirley* actually occurred to her. Being bitten by a dog she believed to be mad, she applied cautery with her own hand, telling no one till the danger was over; and she thrashed her own bull-dog, Keeper, with the bare hands till she conquered him, though she had been warned that he would spring at the throat of anyone who struck him. "I have never seen her parallel in anything," writes her sister in the *Biographical Notice*. "Stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone."

The book she wrote stands alone too. *Wuthering Heights* is a novel of extraordinary power, going far, with her poems, to justify the opinion of Arnold, that the author's soul

> "Knew no fellow for might,
> Passion, vehemence, grief,
> Daring, since Byron died."

But it is a book not to be read with pleasure. The first picture of the Heights is revolting from its brutal inhumanity. To those who know only the softer southern life, the wild stories and the rugged characters of Yorkshire seem to be here exaggerated

almost beyond the bounds of belief; and however those stories may explain, they do not justify in art such a picture. The book is spoilt because its author has not known how to humanise it. If Charlotte Brontë's work is impaired because she makes too deep the shadows and shows too little the lights of life, Emily sins in that way tenfold more grievously. And yet there is an irresistible attraction in all that remains of this austere and sombre genius. What might not such "passion, vehemence, grief, daring," have accomplished if years had brought a mellower wisdom to guide them? Emily Brontë was clearly the inferior of her sister in artistic sense; and what she has accomplished, with the exception of her noble poems, is far less valuable. Even in the hands of Time she might have proved an intractable pupil, and have marred other novels as she marred *Wuthering Heights* by the very excess of the qualities which made her great. But she had immense reserves of power clamorously demanding an outlet; and it is hard to resist the belief that she would, sooner or later, in verse if not in prose, have found one worthy of herself.

In the life of her friend Charlotte Brontë, Mrs Gaskell added one to the very small group of English biographies which their grace, charm and inherent worth have made permanent parts of literature. For that service alone she would have been justly entitled to no mean share of praise and honour; for there are few things more difficult than to write a really good biography. But Mrs Gaskell was likewise one of the foremost novelists of her time; and her fictions, though inferior in power to those of at least three or four of her contemporaries, have nevertheless that incommunicable literary flavour which is the surest passport to immortality. *Cranford* belongs to the class of works of which *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Pride and Prejudice* are perhaps the greatest examples; and it is not less perfect than they.

Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810–1865) was the daughter of a certain William Stevenson who at one period of his life was a Unitarian minister; and her husband was a minister of the same sect. Their life in Manchester gave her the materials out of which she made her first novel, *Mary Barton* (1848), and also great part

of *North and South* (1855). The anomalies of the distribution of wealth, which were brought about through the concentration of industry by the development of machinery worked by steam, could not fail to strike an observer situated as Mrs Gaskell was. She was brought into daily contact with misery, destitution and degradation among the workers; and she saw, on the other hand, the wealth and luxury of the manufacturers, many of whom practically acknowledged no duty towards their hands, and without concern saw them herding together like brutes rather than human beings. It is this first-hand knowledge which gives substance to *Mary Barton*; it was the feeling that the picture was drawn from life which carried the book into immediate popularity; and it was the same feeling which brought upon the anonymous author W. R. Greg's charge of misrepresenting the employers[1]. If Carson was meant to be typical of the employer, there is doubtless some foundation for the charge. But in the nature of things a work of fiction cannot balance all considerations like a scientific treatise. The employer of the novel must be an individual man with a specific character. If he is utterly abnormal, a sort of being scarcely to be found in nature, the novelist may justly be blamed; but if he is a fair representative of a class, it is no sound defence to say that there are many others a good deal better, and many more utterly unlike him. And it can hardly be denied that there were a good many employers quite as bad as Mrs Gaskell's Carson; while the history of factory legislation proves conclusively that the whole class of employers needed to be roused to a more lively sense of their duties to their workmen. Further, it is only fair to Mrs Gaskell to set against Carson the excellent picture in *North and South* of Thornton, an employer not by any means faultless, but fair-minded, and, under all the hardness of his exterior, human to the core. Possibly the colours of the latter picture were in some measure brightened by the influence of Greg's criticism: at any rate *North and South* is written in a spirit of scrupulous fairness. The pathetic story of the Boucher family shows the miseries to which the industrial system may give rise; but both Thornton the manufacturer and Nicholas Higgins the

[1] See Greg's essay on *Mary Barton*.

factory hand are men who command sympathy each for his class. The lesson of the book is that the evils of the factory system are due, not to the wickedness of either the one class or the other, but to that absence of human relations between them which renders mutual comprehension almost impossible and misjudgment almost inevitable, and which dries up the springs of emotion, or makes them flow with the Greek charity, not the English love.

It is not however in works of this class that Mrs Gaskell appears at her best. Some critics doubted whether the writer of *Mary Barton* possessed humour. It was in fact Mrs Gaskell's most precious gift, and it is that which will longest keep her writings sweet. Neither the circumstances of her own life when *Mary Barton* was written, nor the nature of the subject-matter, encouraged humorous representation; yet even in *Mary Barton* a careful reader will detect its presence, while in the later novels it is an unfailing ingredient. Even the tragic *Ruth* (1853) is softened by the humorous character of Sally; and in *North and South* there are some delicious bits, such as the faithful old servant's criticism of Mr Hale, the clergyman whose conscientious doubts have moved him to resign his living. "Master was born, I suppose, for to marry missus. If I thought he loved her properly, I might get to love him in time. But he should ha' made a deal more of her, and not been always reading, reading, thinking, thinking. See what it has brought him to. Many a one who never reads nor thinks either, gets to be Rector, and Dean, and what not; and I dare say master might, if he'd just minded missus, and let the weary reading and thinking alone." But this takes us far away from the atmosphere of factories, and it is in quite a different air that the flower of Mrs Gaskell's humour blooms. She is one of those who have felt the charm of provincial England and who have given a literary immortality to English village life. *Cranford* (1853) is not only her masterpiece, but it stands on a wholly different plane from the rest of her works. In the case of Thackeray, or Dickens, or George Eliot, or Charlotte Brontë, there is reasonable doubt as to which work should be placed first; and though each reader has his preference, nearly all would admit that there is much to be said in favour of

the views of others; but to prefer any other of Mrs Gaskell's novels to *Cranford* would lay the critic open to a charge of eccentricity.

Though marriage immured her in the crowded streets of Manchester, Mrs Gaskell's childhood and youth had been spent in the quaint and picturesque little Cheshire town of Knutsford, and there lies all that remains of her. In those days, before the railway touched it, Knutsford was far quieter and quainter than it appears now to the eye of the pilgrim who visits it for the sake of Mrs Gaskell. It lies in the midst of characteristically English scenery. Great parks with stately trees and still meres, and old Halls which carry the imagination back for hundreds of years, surround it, and oak-timbered houses are still to be seen in the streets. The little town was then a veritable Sleepy Hollow; and yet it was near enough to the great industrial centres of Lancashire to feel the pulsing of "the tragic heart of towns." Exactly this is the atmosphere of *Cranford*. Peace is in every page of the book, that peace whose growth is only possible upon the soil of an ancient civilisation. And yet it is not absolute peace. The young manhood of the place has been drained away, and there is a dim consciousness of unrest, a brooding sense of change to come, like that vague, inaudible disturbance of the atmosphere in a quiet place, of which we become aware only when we contrast the absolute stillness of the Sabbath of rest with the relative stillness of the week. This wonderful sense of atmosphere is nowhere more skilfully given than in *Cranford*. There is something of the same nature in *Our Village*; but *Cranford* has the added charm of a story, and is an artistic whole.

The characters of *Cranford* are admirable. The simple and manly sincerity of Captain Brown, and the crushed but indestructibly sweet nature of Miss Matty, make them the reader's friends for ever. The book is full of delicious bits of humour and pathos. The small gentilities, the petty occupations, the "much ado about nothing" of a narrow society untroubled with ideas, are touched with a skill hardly to be matched outside Goldsmith's masterpiece. The materials are as commonplace as possible, and yet the result is admirable. A special feature of Mrs Gaskell's art is

the skilful use of juxtaposition. Take for example Miss Jenkyns s indorsation of an old letter: "Letter of pious congratulation and exhortation from my venerable grandfather to my beloved mother, on occasion of my own birth. Also some practical remarks on the advisability of keeping warm the extremities of infants, from my excellent grandmother."

Through the remainder of her life Mrs Gaskell plied an active pen. She was the author in all of some forty stories, long and short, the most important, in addition to those already named, being *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), *Cousin Phillis* (1863–64) and *Wives and Daughters*, which was appearing serially in *The Cornhill Magazine* at the time of her death, and which was left unfinished. Much of the charm of *Cranford* is to be found in all of them, and *Cousin Phillis* has a rare grace, but still there is a gulf between *Cranford* and the best of them. Had she written several stories of the quality of *Cranford*, Mrs Gaskell must have ranked among the greatest of English novelists. As it is, a writer who is always good but only once indubitably great seems to be most fairly classed high in the second rank.

Mrs Gaskell's stories are a testimony to the goodness of her heart as well as to her genius. From beginning to end they contain no ill-natured word. They have in a high degree that power which specially accompanies humour, the power to excite interest in the writer. No one can be indifferent to the personality of those who possess it; and when it is kindly the interest becomes personal affection. Mrs Gaskell has a place along with Goldsmith and Charles Lamb among writers who are not only admired but loved.

Her contemporary George Eliot (1819–1880) commands more admiration but less love. The very greatness of her genius, by lifting her so far above the reader, tends to chill the sense of personal relationship: "the solemn peaks but to the stars are known." A few, greater still, have had the knack of making men oblivious of the distance. Scott had it; and in the comedies at least we often forget the incomparable greatness of Shakespeare in his own attractiveness. But George Eliot sat upon a solitary throne, which few cared to approach.

Mary Ann Evans, whose own name has been sunk in the *nom de plume* which she adopted, was born in Warwickshire. She was thus, like Shakespeare, a borderer; and she had Welsh blood in her veins, as perhaps Shakespeare had in his. Her regular education did not reach far, though it was quite as good as that of the average middle-class girl of her time, or rather better. She was sent to school first at Attleborough, then at Nuneaton, and finally at Coventry, whence she was withdrawn in 1835; and, her mother dying in 1836, the girl of seventeen found herself burdened with the charge of her father's house. She took a just pride in her butter-making and cheese-making and in the general excellence of her household management[1]; but her mind was far too active to rest content with that alone, and she continued to study French, German and Italian, Latin and Greek and music.

At this time Mary Ann Evans was profoundly religious, and, after the straitest sect of the Calvinists, so firm a believer as to be shocked at the idea of the possible salvation of any who did not reach the proper standard of orthodoxy. Her early letters are full of quotations from scripture, and of evangelical piety even to excess; and she was so ascetic that on her first visit to London, in 1838, she would not go to any theatre. She had breathed the atmosphere of evangelicalism in the schools she had attended, and their influence had been confirmed by her aunt Elizabeth, a Methodist preacher, the original of Dinah Morris. On the other hand, her brother Isaac had adopted High Church views, and the arguments between them were frequent and sustained. It hardly needs the testimony of the biography to convince us of this, for George Eliot's mind was essentially argumentative, and nothing in her correspondence is more remarkable than its ratiocinative cast. It has no share of the easy simplicity and the light gossip of the letters of Edward FitzGerald, or of Cowper, or of Horace Walpole.

[1] George Eliot had to the last a high opinion of the life of practical usefulness. "Did you not then find enough to interest you in your family?" was her question addressed to a successful lady novelist who was married and had children; and if she herself had had children it is probable that her novels would never have been written. [Mrs Oliphant's *William Blackwood*, i. 463.]

Miss Evans however was not the person to rest long content with beliefs inherited or accepted on authority. The power of her intellect brought on at an unusually early age one of those spiritual crises to which original minds are liable, and which were perhaps especially frequent in that age. She was driven on by her intellect to question everything. "I admit discussion," she says at a later date, "on every matter except dinner and debts. I hold that the first must be eaten and the second must be paid. These are my only prejudices." The biography aptly quotes, as applicable to herself, a sentence from *Daniel Deronda*: "You can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl." The movement which was now begun in her mind speedily taught her how galling was the slavery. She passed through various phases within the fold of the Church, but speedily arrived at the "Anti-Supernatural," and in that stage wore an anti-supernatural cap, which, whatever may have been its merits as a symbol of faith, or want of faith, appears to have been unbecoming as a form of head-gear. The change produced a complete revolution in her tastes, so that what she had formerly admired she now loathed. In 1838 she enjoys Hannah More's letters, and calls hers a "blessed" character[1]. Ten years later she writes: "I am glad you detest Hannah More's letters. I like neither her letters, nor her books, nor her character[2]."

On this side of her intellect a powerful influence was exercised by the Bray family, whom she came to know on the removal of her father in 1841 to the neighbourhood of Coventry. Both Mr and Mrs Bray, and also the brother and sister of the latter, were writers of some repute and power. Charles Hennell's *Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838) especially was a book of great ability whose reputation was not limited to England. It had been translated into German with a preface by Strauss himself. Doubts had been already suggested to Miss Evans's mind by Isaac Taylor's *Ancient Christianity* (1839–1840), and both the man and the book, as well as his *Physical Theory of Another Life* (1836), are worthy of remembrance were it only for

[1] Cross's *Life of George Eliot*, i. 41. [2] *ibid.* i. 170.

the admiration they stirred in her mind and the influence they exercised over her. Their caution and moderation serve as a measure of Miss Evans's orthodoxy at this date. Her doubts were greatly deepened by the discussions she now heard and the literature to which she was introduced. With an excess of conscientiousness which she afterwards regretted, Miss Evans, finding herself out of sympathy with orthodox religious teaching, determined not to go to church, a resolution which led to a very painful breach with her father. The father and daughter were ultimately reconciled by her yielding on the point of attendance at church; but her opinions never moved back towards the current views of Christianity.

Miss Evans already felt the attraction of literature, and had written a little and projected more. The earliest published of her writings was a religious poem which appeared in *The Christian Observer* in January, 1840. But, like Charlotte Brontë, she was no poet. "What do you think of the Progress of Architecture as a subject for Poetry[1]?" she asks in 1841. Comment is unnecessary. She proposed also to draw up a chart of ecclesiastical history, and to embody in it "an application of the apocalyptic prophecies" How she meant to do it is not clear; but that George Eliot once entertained the idea is curious. It was however to her connexion with the Brays that Miss Evans owed her real introduction to literature. A friend of theirs, Miss Brabant, had begun the translation of Strauss's *Leben Jesu*, and then abandoned it on her marriage with Mr Hennell; and in succession to her Miss Evans was induced to undertake the work. Her version, published in 1846, proves her competency at once in the German language and in philosophy. In spite of the scantiness of her scholastic training, she made herself a woman of very wide culture, being indeed far superior in this respect not only to the women, but to the men as well, who were her contemporaries in fiction. She was an excellent linguist, having a wide acquaintance with Greek and Latin literature, as well as with French, German and Italian. In the course of her translation of Strauss she felt the need of Hebrew, and forthwith taught herself that language.

[1] Cross's *Life of George Eliot*, i. 81.

She was moreover widely read in contemporary speculation, both on its scientific and on its philosophic sides, and she took the deepest intellectual pleasure in it. She was ready in appreciation and keen in criticism of philosophic ideas; but in this sphere her mind was not originative. For that reason there is nothing more to be regretted than the sway philosophy afterwards exercised over her. In her later works there is too much theory and too little observation, too much reasoning and too little intuition. Besides Strauss, she translated Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* (1854), the only book she ever published under her own name.

The direct remuneration Miss Evans received for the translation of Strauss was miserably inadequate, but the book served to make her known in literary circles. Like all writers she felt the attraction of London; but so long as her father lived she was bound to him. His death in 1849 set her free, and two years later she became assistant editor of *The Westminster Review*, to which she herself contributed a number of weighty articles. The most celebrated was *Worldliness and Other-Worldliness*. Those to whom it would have been most instructive were not in the habit of reading *The Westminster Review*; but to many even of these there penetrated the knowledge that it was possible to regard "other-worldliness" as a thing no less selfish and objectionable and essentially irreligious than worldliness. The writer had not yet found her true *métier*; but yet in the essays of this period there are many gleams of the wisdom and the humour which illuminate the stories of later days.

It was at this time that Miss Evans made the acquaintance of George Henry Lewes, her connexion with whom remains the most debatable point in her career. Charlotte Brontë had in *Jane Eyre* pronounced *her* verdict on just such a case; and she had incurred unreasonable blame for even stating it. Mary Ann Evans felt differently, and in 1854 she consented to live as the wife of Lewes. Though the connexion was a happy one, she who was hereafter known to her friends as Mrs Lewes had much to suffer. They who were readiest to cast stones were in most cases immeasurably beneath her in moral worth; yet there were many, by no means prone to pay homage to mere respectability,

who looked grave because of the consequences to society which might flow from such an act. We may see the effect of the position in which she had placed herself in George Eliot's frequent recurrence to problems of marriage; and several powerful and eloquent passages suggest the idea that she was never able to rid her own mind of uneasiness as to the moral character of her act. No writer insists more strongly on the momentous nature of the conjugal relation; no writer is more innocent of any sentence or word tending to undermine it or to weaken the sense of its binding force. But whatever may have been the pain to herself, literature is the richer for this uneasiness of the great novelist's mind. It is probably the personal emotion behind them which makes the passages referred to among the most solemnly impressive she has written.

In the literary sense, the influence of Lewes upon George Eliot was excellent, though doubtless there was some mixture of evil with the good. The bent of Lewes's mind and the nature of his pursuits must have encouraged and increased her own tendency to abstract thought; and in *Daniel Deronda* and *Theophrastus Such* we see how dangerous to her art was that tendency. But it was native in her mind, Lewes did not implant it; and against this problematical evil has to be set the great amount of positive good he certainly did. It was he who first suggested to her that she possessed the gift for fiction, and encouraged her to write the story of *Amos Barton*. It was he too who afterwards shielded her sensitiveness from any rude breath of criticism; and he was constantly at hand with sympathetic help and suggestion. There is something charming and even touching in the spectacle of this man, naturally vain and self-confident, consenting to sink into the background and to devote himself to the nurture of his wife's genius.

Scenes of Clerical Life ran, in *Blackwood's Magazine*, through the greater part of the year 1857. At first even the publisher had not so much as a pseudonym on which to hang the stories. *Amos Barton* was introduced by Lewes as the work of a sensitive and diffident friend; whom the Blackwoods believed to be a man, and guessed to be a clergyman. The name George Eliot was

adopted in correspondence with the publishers while *Scenes of Clerical Life* was appearing. The full revelation was forced from the unwilling writer in 1859 by the claim of the impostor Liggins to the authorship. Strangely enough, two of the most trusted of Blackwood's literary advisers pronounced against *Amos Barton*. His own approval was so cautiously expressed as slightly to wound the sensitive author; but, as he sensibly remarked, "criticism would assume a much soberer tone were critics compelled *seriously to act* whenever they expressed an opinion[1]." The readers of the magazine however showed no hesitation. *Scenes of Clerical Life* was immediately reprinted, and, even before she had written anything on the scale of a novel, George Eliot took rank as one of the foremost writers of fiction of the time.

For a few years she wrote rapidly as well as powerfully. *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *Silas Marner* (1861) are, quality considered, a wonderful tale of work. A visit to Italy made a slight break, and it was not till 1863 that *Romola* appeared; but the longer interval was by no means spent in idleness. *Romola* was the most laborious of all her works. She made a study of Florentine history to qualify herself for her self-imposed task, and her declaration that she began the book a young woman and ended it an old one indicates the strain it put upon her. Whether the effect of this strain was permanent, or, as is more probable, she had simply used up the cream of her material, *Romola* is a turning-point in the career of George Eliot. She could still write grandly, but with her it is "never glad confident morning again": the easy mastery is gone, and we see marks of labour where before there is the sense of spontaneity. At no time was she a facile or a naturally prolific writer like Dickens; but after the date of *Romola* the intervals between her works became longer, and the sense of effort conveyed by them is more marked than it is in any of them down to *Silas Marner*. Three years separated *Romola* from the next novel, *Felix Holt* (1866); and after that George Eliot made a new venture. She had already written a version of *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868); but before it was published she visited Spain and afterwards rewrote

[1] Mrs Oliphant's *William Blackwood*, ii. 435.

the poem. Her only other long work of verse, *The Legend of Jubal*, was published with other pieces in 1874. In the interval between these two poems she had reverted to prose, and published *Middlemarch* in parts, as the novels of Dickens were published, in 1871 and 1872. Her last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, followed in 1876; and the volume of essays entitled *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879) closed her literary career. She died in December, 1880, having in the same year married (Lewes being now dead) Mr J. W. Cross.

In at least one respect George Eliot stands alone among English novelists. No one before her time had so combined profound culture in philosophy with insight into character and keen observation. Scott had read even more widely, but he was not regularly learned; Thackeray had great knowledge, but he was not a systematic thinker; Lytton was superficial and pretentious; and none of the other novelists in her own age or in the generation preceding it is in this respect fit to be named with her at all. The combination gives richness and weight to many a passage in her writings, and to some complete works. In her earlier books it has the same sort of charm as a similar combination has in the dialogues of Plato. Down to *Silas Marner* it may be regarded as an unmixed boon; but afterwards evidence accumulates that it was not without its dangers. Thought crushes art, and the style becomes heavy and laboured. *Daniel Deronda*, *Theophrastus Such* and the poems especially illustrate defects of which many were conscious in George Eliot's conversation, and which force themselves into notice in almost every letter that she wrote.

What preserves the earlier novels from this defect is, in the first place, the element of concrete experience which is a principal ingredient in all of them; and, secondly, their saving grace of humour. In both respects George Eliot afterwards shows a marked decline. As to the former point, it is notorious that in the earlier novels George Eliot drew very freely on the stores of her memory. Scene after scene, character after character, in these novels has been identified with some place or person within the range of her early experience. Her mansions and cottages, her lanes and meadows, are those to which she had been accustomed

to drive in childhood with her father, or over which she had rambled with her brother. Still more are the characters of her novels the figures with whom she had been familiar; and almost in proportion to the familiarity is the frequency of their appearance. No other group was so often laid under contribution as her own family. Her father, her mother, her brother, her sister, her aunt and herself, all appear in her pages. We need not press the identification too far. "There is not a single portrait in *Adam Bede*," she says; "only the suggestions of experience wrought up into new combinations[1]." But though few or none of the characters are transcribed from the life without change or adaptation, there can be no reasonable doubt that many of them bore a marked resemblance to real men and women. Her brother Isaac had no difficulty in detecting his sister's hand behind the screen of her anonymity; and it is significant that the man Liggins, who was put forward as the veritable author of *Scenes of Clerical Life* and of *Adam Bede*, had the honour thrust upon him. He at first disowned the books; but his neighbours were so sure upon the point that he yielded to their better knowledge. They were sure because they saw that the author must be someone from their neighbourhood, and who could it possibly be but Liggins? The premiss was right, but the conclusion was wrong. They were quite right in the conviction that only a native of their district could have shown such intimate local knowledge; and their only mistake lay in the belief that Liggins, and he alone, possessed the power necessary to use this local knowledge.

Such treasures of memory are soon exhausted: they are rather a mine, the contents of which can be used once for all, than a fertile field which can be cropped year after year. And as they are exhausted their possessor has to go farther afield for characters and schemes. In *Romola* it is a foreign land and a distant age; in *Felix Holt* we have the problems of politics; in *Daniel Deronda* race and heredity. We can see therefore why it is that a certain easy grace which belongs to the earlier novels is wanting to the later ones. It is like writing in a foreign tongue. The language may have been well learnt, the grammar may be thoroughly

[1] Cross's *Life of George Eliot*, ii. 67–68.

understood; but it was not learnt at the mother's knee, and it has not become part of the writer's very being. And so, as theory and conscious thought more and more take the place of intuition and of memories reaching back to the dim beginnings of conscious being, George Eliot becomes more ponderous and less graceful. David has put on the armour of Saul, but he was a more formidable enemy with the sling and the smooth stones. After *Silas Marner* George Eliot achieved just one great triumph, *Middlemarch*, and in it she is back again in her own special field, the English midlands. Her other works might have won the reputation of a lesser writer, but they failed to sustain hers.

In the earlier novels the characters are alive in every limb. Serious and comic, simple and deep, thoughtful and foolish, they are all convincing. They also present astonishing scope and variety. Naturally enough, the women are better than the men: one of the principal grounds on which Dickens pronounced so confidently on the question of the sex of the author of *Scenes of Clerical Life* was that the women there were "more informed from within" than the men; and though that acute critic, Mrs Carlyle, was deceived, she in imagination provided the middle-aged author with a wife, to whom he owed "those beautiful *feminine* touches" in *Adam Bede*[1]. Yet George Eliot in her delineation of the masculine character stands far above any other female writer. Adam Bede (her father) and Tom Tulliver (her brother) are so good that we have to compare them with Maggie Tulliver (herself), Dinah Morris (her aunt) and Hetty Sorrel, to see that there are still some touches wanting, such as no woman has ever given to a masculine character, and as, perhaps, no man but Shakespeare has ever given to a feminine one.

This dependence upon experience is common to all writers. Even centaurs and Medusas and monsters of all sorts are only incongruous combinations of the elements of experience; while, at the other end of the scale, the airiest sylph has to embody itself, just as does the modern ghost which consents to be photographed, and so proves that it is something more, or less, than

[1] *Life of George Eliot*, ii. 11.

mere spirit. But in the case of female writers the dependence seems to be especially close; or, at all events, it obtrudes itself upon the attention. We have noticed this already in the case of Charlotte Brontë and Mrs Gaskell. It is true also of Miss Austen and Miss Ferrier. All these writers, as well as George Eliot, are best when they keep closest to that which they most familiarly know. In the case of Charlotte Brontë and Mrs Gaskell and George Eliot, it seems to have been especially the experience of girlhood that was fruitful in literature; at least not one of them ever succeeded in using later experience with the ease and mastery shown in the manipulation of that which came from early years. The same principle holds, doubtless, in the case of men like Fielding and Smollett and Scott; but it is disguised by their wider knowledge of life. Dickens, who knew nothing well but the London streets, had come into contact there with an endless variety of characters and had stored his memory with innumerable "situations." There are signs of exhaustion in the later works both of Dickens and of Scott; but their vein is not so soon worked out as it inevitably is in the case of the women. George Eliot unquestionably showed wisdom in writing slowly; and most writers of her sex have either shown a want of wisdom, or have, like Mrs Oliphant, betrayed the pressure of necessity in writing rapidly and publishing often. Probably her view changed with time, but at the beginning of her career George Eliot had an instinctive feeling that her surest ground was the ground of her own experience. "Shall I ever," she asks in her *Journal* in 1859, "write another book as true as *Adam Bede*?" and the doubt was well founded. Two or three of her subsequent works excel *Adam Bede* in some other respects, but certainly none is more true throughout.

With the exhaustion of the material of experience there goes, in George Eliot's case, a great decline in the quantity and the quality of the humour of her novels. If a critic wishes to illustrate her humour, he almost invariably refers to the characters of the earlier novels, to the Poysers and Gleggs, to the scene at the Rainbow, or to some passage in *Scenes of Clerical Life*. Though humour is present still in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel*

Deronda, and though, in the former especially, there are some delicious passages, yet, if we judged by these novels alone, we should not single humour out as one of George Eliot's principal gifts. And yet such it is. The great charm of her rural characters —farmers, inn-keepers, housewives—is their humour.

We may distinguish two different kinds of humour. One is that which Shakespeare has embodied in the person of Falstaff, in whom it is combined with extraordinary mental gifts. No character in imaginative literature is so fertile in expedients and so rich in suggestion as Falstaff: he is at once mirthful himself and a cause of mirth in others. So too is Sam Weller; his wit and humour are conscious, and he laughs with, and often at, his interlocutor. It is not so with the tribe of Dogberry and Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Though the cause of mirth in others, they are themselves far from mirthful. We read with delight speeches uttered with the most sober purpose. Such characters are unconsciously humorous; and it is humour of this sort that Mr Barrie has in mind when he puts into the mouth of Tammas Haggart the opinion that to make humour is sufficient work for one man, the labour of understanding it must be undergone by someone else.

Now this is the sort of humour in which George Eliot excels. There is wit as well as wisdom in her works; there are plenty of bright and illuminating phrases whose effect depends at least as much upon their lively expression as upon their truth. But there is no character of the Falstaff type, none even who shows the roguery of a Touchstone. The humour is mainly found in characters of humble rank, or of imperfect education and moderate intelligence; and greatly would they have been surprised at the idea that their talk was amusing. Her greatest triumphs in humour are to be found in *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*; and there the talks about household linen and furniture and recipes, and the disputes about family dignity, are to the speakers matter of the most serious import. The novelist has done what Tammas Haggart's auditor was required to do: she has understood the humour which Mrs Poyser makes. This is almost literally the case; for George Eliot had actually heard these conversations,

or something so like them that we need not trouble about the difference.

A great part of George Eliot's power is due to sympathy. She was herself sensitive to excess; but while many sensitive people pay little regard to the feelings of others, George Eliot showed that scrupulous forbearance of which she herself felt the need. Nowhere does she show more comprehension or greater sympathy than in dealing with questions of religion. She herself had completely thrown off dogmatic belief; but she had not done it without a struggle, and she never ceased to sympathise with the beliefs she could no longer share. The memory of the painful estrangement from her father, which never faded from her mind, warned her how the consequences of a change of creed might spread. There is therefore none of the spirit of the iconoclast in her work. No wanton attack upon the faith of others can be charged against her; and she would have approved of the lines of her contemporary, Matthew Arnold, who asks with regard to the faiths which he himself can no longer share,

> "Which has not taught weak wills how much they can?
> Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain?
> Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man:
> *Thou must be born again!*"

She would have argued too with Browning that love, the soul of religion, is alike in the dissenting chapel, despite the intellectual vulgarity of its doctrine, and in the Romish church, despite the incredibility of its dogma. "I have too profound a conviction," she writes, "of the efficacy that lies in all sincere faith, and the spiritual blight that comes with no faith, to have any negative propagandism in me."

Her own experience of the pain of divisions on the score of religion is in part the secret of George Eliot's sympathetic delineation of clergymen, wherein she contrasts strikingly with Charlotte Brontë. The latter, though she was the daughter, and though she became the wife, of a clergyman, hardly ever introduces a clerical character without satire; while George Eliot, sceptic and positivist, treats with sympathy and evident liking every form of Christian ministry, from Savonarola's on the one hand to

Dinah Morris's on the other. Her very detachment from creeds, no doubt, helped towards this catholicity, so unlike anything usually found in what is called the 'Catholic' spirit. But her sympathy was by no means limited to extremists or to the eccentric. She has a fine gallery of portraits of quiet, worthy, simple-minded clergymen of the Church of England, unmoved by the great controversy of 'High' and 'Low' and 'Broad,' neither 'liberal' nor 'catholic,' but content to walk their narrow round of parish duties, to love their neighbours and to minister to their wants, unostentatiously, according to the tradition handed down to them from their fathers. This is the tone of George Eliot's pictures of clergymen and ministers, from Amos Barton and Maynard Gilfil to Rufus Holt. In her later novels such figures are less common, because the raw material of memory, from which they were drawn, was used up, and it was not of a sort which could be replaced from the society then open to her. George Eliot is ready enough to smile gently at her clerical characters. They are not faultless, and they are never men of great force; but she rarely satirises them, and she is never bitter. When, as in the striking case of Casaubon, she is satirical and contemptuous, the contempt is for something outside the clerical character. Casaubon is a clergyman, as it were, by accident; but "pre-ordinance and first decree" made him a hide-bound pedant. All George Eliot's satire is reserved for this pedantry; on it Dorothea makes shipwreck of her life; it, or rather the nature which makes it possible, dictates the terms of that masterpiece of small-mindedness, Casaubon's will.

On the question of marriage too the personal experience of George Eliot certainly made her sympathies more keen. The space it occupies in her novels is remarkable. To her, marriage is the source of most of the tragedy of life. It is so in the cases of Romola, of Dorothea and of Lydgate; and the tragedies of *Adam Bede* and of *The Mill on the Floss* also spring from love-stories. But here again she would seem to have been sobered and awed by her own history, and no sentence from her pen countenances connexions readily made and as readily broken. The history of Maggie Tulliver is one of renunciation; and, though

Adam Bede is a tale of seduction, it has been truly said that the author carefully refrains from exciting sympathy with Hetty, and that there are few books more calculated to make the seducer pause in his career. The morality of George Eliot's books is not only correct, but austere.

As the materials furnished by her experience became more scanty, George Eliot fell back upon the resources of her thought. Hence her works became a conscious and deliberate treatment of interesting problems or speculations, and the analytical element gained prominence. Here lies the dividing line between two great classes of the critics of George Eliot. Few, if any, dispute her right to a place among the greatest of English novelists. Her earlier novels, with their charming picture of the life of the country and of small towns, are amply sufficient to vindicate her title to that rank. But for her more devoted admirers this has hardly sufficed. They would not only claim for her a place beside Scott and Thackeray and Fielding, but would fain set her upon a pedestal loftier than any; and to make the claim plausible most of them feel themselves obliged to insist upon the excellence of the later and more philosophical novels[1]. Here, they argue, there is a seriousness of purpose, a depth of thought and a mastery of principle, not to be matched in the works of any other writer of fiction; and just as *Hamlet*, by reason of its weight of thought, is greater than *Henry IV*, perfect as the latter is in its own way, so *Romola* and *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* are greater than *Tom Jones*, or *The Antiquary*, or *Old Mortality*, or *Esmond*, or *Vanity Fair*, or *The Cloister and the Hearth*. *Romola*, according to this view, is a great historical novel, the fruit of serious study, presenting the carefully-weighed conclusions of a great philosopher; it must therefore be superior to *Waverley* and *Old Mortality*, books written *currente calamo* by one who claimed to do no more than amuse. It must be greater

[1] There are however some who have claimed for her this lofty position on the score of the early novels alone. "This publication of *Adam Bede*," writes Sidney Lanier, "placed George Eliot decisively at the head of English novel-writers, with only Dickens for second, even." (*The English Novel*, quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism*.)

even than *Esmond*, which was indeed written with scrupulous care, but which embodies no theory and is the work of one who did not pretend to be a philosopher. Neither is there anything in the other novelists parallel to such deliberate studies as *Felix Holt*, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.

One of the most remarkable features of recent criticism has been the development of the systematic study of English literature in France. Amongst the claims of Voltaire to gratitude must be ranked the fact that he pointed out to his countrymen the greatness of English literature; but notwithstanding Voltaire, Taine, when he wrote his *History of English Literature*, still stood almost alone. Since that date, however, much of the best criticism of English writers has been the work of Frenchmen. Jusserand, Texte, Beljame, Legouis, Angellier and Morel, are names which will occur to every student. Even the barrier of dialect has not prevented a most sympathetic and discriminating treatment of Burns; even a poet so far below the greatest as Thomson has been exhaustively examined and appreciatively criticised. It is clear, as Matthew Arnold taught, that the critic who speaks another tongue and who belongs to another race is likely to be free from some prejudices which may beset a fellow-countryman. Arnold referred especially to the judgment of Edmond Scherer on Milton; and this very critic, who was unsurpassed for learning and for keenness of insight, has pronounced emphatically upon the merits of George Eliot, declaring that for her "was reserved the honour of writing the most perfect novels yet known." Scherer takes substantially the view of the thoroughgoing panegyrists, who admire equally George Eliot's philosophy and her descriptive power, her analysis and her intuition. Such a judgment as this, pronounced by such an authority, commands respect; but it may reasonably be doubted whether it will commend itself to future ages.

Time has made it increasingly difficult to maintain the transcendent excellence of the later and more philosophical of George Eliot's novels, and the number of those who attempt to do so grows smaller year by year. When *Daniel Deronda* was in course of publication, the admiring publisher thought that the author was outdoing even *Middlemarch*. Allowance must be made for the

complacency of criticism in private correspondence; but a kind of George Eliot superstition had grown up, and whatever the great writer gave to the world was received with something of the awe due to a revelation; but the awe has gradually passed away, and doubts have thickened round the revelation. There are fine, even grand, materials in all the later novels, and not least in *Romola*: the character of Tito Melema alone would lift the work in which it appears to the verge of greatness, and the picture of old Bardo in his library is admirable. Yet *Romola* does not carry conviction of the historical genius of the writer. Something of the vividness and ready mastery of Scott is lacking. Making every allowance for the mental power of George Eliot, it is incredible that, in the time at her disposal, she could have acquired a real mastery of her subject; but, above all, that instinctive sympathy which was necessary for the proper handling of it is not there. Dante Rossetti, one of the most competent of judges as to the theme, thought that George Eliot had not quite succeeded in entering into Italian life; and Negri, who wrote a book in admiration of her genius, condemned as untrue both the talk of her Florentines and the character of Romola herself[1]. She did not of her own impulse conceive scenes and characters under the conditions of another country and another century; and so, while the book is stately and grand, the movement is stiff; and the familiar touches of nature in the English novels are worth more than all the learning with which the Italian one is loaded. Probably it violates history less than the plays of Shakespeare or the novels of Scott; but it contains no historical character fit to set beside Prince Hal or Hotspur, Louis XI or King James.

Still less was George Eliot completely successful in her aim in *Felix Holt* or in *Daniel Deronda*. By general consent now they are put lowest in the rank of their author's novels; and in spite of the awe inspired by her name, *Deronda* was felt even at the time of publication to mark a decline in her powers. She failed to impart to others the interest she herself felt in Jewish nationality, and most readers found the 'Zionism' of her characters somewhat

[1] *Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. 150.

wearisome. It must be added, however, that time has shown her to have been a pioneer, that since the publication of *Daniel Deronda* some serious steps have been taken towards the replanting of the Jews in Palestine, and that the idea has the support of some of the best minds among the Jews of the present day. Nevertheless, this fact does not make any more real the somewhat abstract Jewish characters depicted by George Eliot; nor does it supply any more vital bond of union between the Jewish and the English parts of the novel.

But there remained one triumph in George Eliot's later career which went far to redeem these comparative failures. *Middlemarch* is a book so powerfully conceived, and in many ways so admirably executed, that a good case may be made for ranking it first of all George Eliot's works. The *advocatus diaboli* may fairly plead that it is not one story, but a bundle of stories loosely tied together. It is no organic bond, but a mere juxtaposition, which unites the story of Dorothea and Casaubon with that of Lydgate and Rosamond, and both with Bulstrode and with the Garths. *Middlemarch* is, in fact, a sermon upon a text. The prelude, which is as significant as the introductory scene of Tennyson's *Becket*, shows us how "domestic reality" in the shape of an uncle swoops down upon the young Saint Theresa and brings her back to common life; and the whole of *Middlemarch* illustrates the force of just such commonplace or even sordid realities. Lydgate, gifted with great powers and fired with high ambitions, is brought down by the domestic reality of Rosamond Vincy to very ordinary achievement. The young and beautiful idealist Dorothea marries the dry old book-worm Casaubon, because her imagination sees in him a great thinker, and in herself as his wife the instrument to bring the world-awakening thought to light. She finds that the "system of all the mythologies" is a mere valley of dry bones into which its author is powerless to breathe a life-giving spirit. There is no reason, except George Eliot's will or convenience, why these two stories should be told together. Except as they illustrate the effect of "domestic reality" upon soaring ambition and lofty ideals, they are disconnected Lydgate stands outside the life of Casaubon; Dorothea has

little influence upon Rosamond; and it is only in deference to the canons that they are in the end brought into closer relation.

Lack of unity is a grave fault, but not necessarily a fatal one: the charge has been brought against some of the plays of Shakespeare, and they still survive. And nothing else equally serious can be alleged against *Middlemarch*. It is less graceful, less humorous, less varied than the earlier novels. It contains nothing so beautiful as the childhood of Tom and Maggie Tulliver, nothing so passionate as the love of Adam Bede, no rapture like the religious fervour of Dinah Morris. But it is impressive from beginning to end, weighty yet not heavy, often splendidly eloquent, the only book which does equal justice to the two sides of George Eliot, the artistic and the philosophic. There are single characters in some of the other novels greater than any in *Middlemarch*; but no novel she ever wrote contains so many that dwell in the memory. Hence, if it were necessary to judge of her from one book, that which would give the best conception of her powers would be *Middlemarch*.

From George Eliot's tendency to philosophy it was natural that life should present itself to her, increasingly as she grew in years, as a series of problems. Some of her characters are worked out in this way. Tito Melema was a problem. Given a love of pleasure, a shrinking from duty and a dislike of everything that is disagreeable, what will result? The same is true of Silas Marner. The character was suggested to her by an early memory of a man whose expression and manner caused her to regard him as, for some reason, an outcast. What, she asked herself, would be the effect of an unjust exclusion from society? and her answer is Silas Marner. He is not born a miser. In him, the passion for gold is shown to be the consequence of the treatment he receives, which blights his nobler nature and drives him in upon himself. Habit is second nature, and the miserly habit becomes deep-rooted in Silas; but even second nature has not the indomitable force which belongs to nature herself when corroborated, as Bacon phrases it, by custom. Hence the regeneration of Silas is well conceived and is of a piece with the whole character; while if the

miserliness had been instinctive and inborn, the awakening out of it would have been incredible.

Tito through life, and Silas Marner through great part of the time during which he figures before the reader, are essentially self-centred. Casaubon is so more than either of them. The ambitions he conceives are suggested to him by the society in which he lives, but the shaping of them is all his own. The soul of Dryasdust is as solitary in the desert where he lives as that of Shakespeare on his unapproachable height. But such characters are exceptional; and to George Eliot the problem usually presented itself as social, and character seemed to her a thing developed through intercourse with others. There is usually some influence, most commonly that of marriage or of the love which seeks its goal in marriage, which powerfully modifies and perhaps almost transforms the character. Dorothea and Lydgate are cases in point. So is Silas Marner himself; for the period of miserly solitude is only an interlude between the time before, when social forces reduce him to that condition, and the time after, when he is lifted out of it by his love for the child. So are Adam Bede and Mrs Transome and Gwendolen and Maggie Tulliver. The last is the best instance of all, as she is the subtlest of all George Eliot's heroines. Her sensitiveness and her sympathetic imagination make her specially responsive, and she takes her tone from every influence in turn, from the time when she follows her brother's lead in their childish games to the day when both are swept out of life together. The writer was evidently well aware of her own "chameleon-like nature," as her biographer calls it.

The great artist ought to be a philosopher, but there is danger if he be too well aware of the fact. This is the significance of Wordsworth's complaint that the poetry of Goethe was not "inevitable" enough; and Wordsworth himself exemplifies the danger, for it is when he forgets his philosophy that he is most poetical. Browning too has suffered from an excess of systematic thought. And in the case of George Eliot the very quality which was supposed to lift her above her compeers will, perhaps, ultimately place her a little lower than the greatest of them. But her fame is safe as the greatest woman who wrote the English language in the nineteenth century.

Among the other female writers of fiction, whose name is legion, there is none to rival George Eliot in power and range of thought, or Charlotte and Emily Brontë in passion; nor is there any to whom literature is indebted for such a gem as *Cranford*; and probably not a single novel they have written will be read half a century hence except by a few students. There are however two or three who demand notice for their temporary vogue and influence, and one for powers which, if circumstances had permitted her to husband them more carefully, might have won her permanent fame.

The eldest of the novelists alluded to was Mrs Henry Wood (1814–1887), whose sensational and melodramatic *East Lynne* (1861) has no small share of the merits and of the faults of Lord Lytton. Some of her stories are pleasant enough reading, and she shows great ingenuity in the construction of plots, but neither style nor characters are such as to give them a place in literature. *East Lynne* however is noteworthy for the extraordinary popularity which it won, and which it still in great part retains, both as a novel and in the dramatised version. None of Mrs Wood's other works equals *East Lynne* in wide popularity, but several of them—e.g. *Mrs Halliburton's Troubles* (1862), *The Channings* (1862) and the *Johnny Ludlow* tales, begun in her magazine *The Argosy* in 1868—are still read; and they are superior in literary quality to their better-known predecessor. Of similar calibre to Mrs Wood, though she wrote in a different strain, was Dinah Maria Mulock, afterwards Craik (1826–1887), whose *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856) appealed to the taste of the more sober part of the middle class, as *East Lynne* did to that of the more sensation-loving. It is altogether harmless, and faultlessly proper, and irredeemably commonplace.

Charlotte Mary Yonge (1823–1901), whose very titles—*The Daisy Chain, The Chaplet of Pearls*, &c.—proclaim her an ornament of the namby-pamby school which, half a century ago, supplied the most approved intellectual nutriment for girls, was scarcely superior to these last, and might be passed over with an equally cursory notice, but for the extraordinary judgments expressed by contemporaries about her *Heir of Redclyffe* (1856). This book had a marvellous attraction for the band of young

Oxonians who, in those days, surrounded Burne-Jones and William Morris. They thought it "unquestionably one of the greatest books of the world"; and as among those who thus judged were some who afterwards rose to the first rank, the book which so deeply moved and interested them deserves attention. Rossetti himself, who seldom went astray in criticism, was a warm admirer. And yet it is safe to say that whoever in the present generation turns fresh and unbiassed to *The Heir of Redclyffe* will be astonished to discover of what ordinary materials "one of the greatest books of the world" may be composed. It may deserve the panegyric, if milk, plentifully diluted with water, be one of the greatest drinks. But as the opinion quoted was the opinion of extremely able men, there must be a reason for it. No doubt it is to be found in the fact that *The Heir of Redclyffe* embodied exactly the views, and was written in precisely the tone and style, which commended themselves to the young men who were influenced by, though they were not all followers of, the Oxford Movement. Miss Yonge lived in the district of which, from the year 1836, Keble was the ecclesiastical head; and she describes Keble as the chief spiritual influence of her life. The young Oxonians were conscious of the High Church atmosphere of her work, and that being the air they breathed too, they were misled. Otherwise, untrustworthy as contemporary judgments notoriously are, we could scarcely explain such an amazing aberration as this.

The other writer who has been referred to as possessing, perhaps, the elements of greatness was Margaret Oliphant (1828–1897). She began her career with *Margaret Maitland* (1849), about which Jeffrey wrote that nothing so true or so touching, as a picture of Scottish life, had appeared since Galt's *Annals of the Parish*. Mrs Oliphant was always on safe ground when she was dealing with her countrymen; but she by no means confined herself to them. Among her greatest successes were the stories of the series known as the *Chronicles of Carlingford* (1863–1876), where she is bold enough to venture upon ground not unlike that which George Eliot had made her own. She was a very industrious writer, producing biographies (good ones), histories of literature, volumes of miscellaneous essays, and

accounts of the "makers" of various cities, with a fertility which was astonishing; and yet, her friends say, it was difficult to discover when she worked. She seemed to have time for everything, but somehow the tale of bricks was finished. Unquestionably the quality of Mrs Oliphant's work suffered. Much of it—both in fiction and in miscellaneous prose—is extremely flimsy; and if her gifts were really great, we must set it down to over-production that she has written nothing that is likely to live. The criticism made against her over and over again, and with justice, is that her writings are all of a high mediocre level; and the conclusion was drawn that this was just the level of her mind. It may be so: there is not enough evidence to enable anyone to controvert the opinion: but there are here and there passages of a lofty tone which, at any rate, suggest a doubt. The following is not from a work of fiction, but is a very fine piece of criticism on a fellow-craftsman, which may not be widely known, because probably the *Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II* are already little read:—

"Clarissa herself is such a type of character as could have been set forth only by a man habituated to the society of women, and to look upon things very much from their point of view. She is a delicate creature, whose heart has but begun faintly to awaken to any conception of love or individual inclinations at all, when she is suddenly frozen back into herself, into the chill unopened bud of her life, by such a horror as is sufficient to congeal the young blood in its very fountain. Her soft insensibility to any contagion of passion—the shrinking, faint, easily relinquished preference which is all she is ever made to feel for her destroyer—is sometimes brought as an accusation against the perfection of her womanhood. But the critics who do so have not taken the trouble to think that it was a woman in the bud whom Richardson intended to draw—a creature forced into extraordinary development, it is true, but warped by the very influences which urged her life into pathetic blossom, out of that warm and tender sweetness which comes by the natural agency of bright sunshine and common rain. Her heart had begun, as we have said, softly, unawares, to turn towards the man who pretended to love her,

with that shy, sweet, gradual impulsion which is one of the most beautiful things in nature. Her eyes and her heart were being drawn to him modestly and maidenly, in a tenderness half acknowledged, half denied, even to herself; when Fate seized upon the innocent creature, wrapt her in its fatal web, arrested in the first place the rising fancy, chilled and withered it by doubts and fears; and then, by a sudden violent revulsion, closed up the opening bud, with all its fairy colours, and forced forward the pale splendour of despair, chill maiden flower, stealing every hue of colour and perfume of life out of its exquisite climax of sorrow and decay. No man less acquainted with all the secret unseen sweetness of a girl's heart—its brooding over itself, its soft reluctance, its delight in the hesitations and tender delays which irritate passion into frenzy—could have drawn the early Clarissa, so passionless and dutiful, exacting nothing but the right to reject a repugnant suitor, and ready to make a sacrifice of the soft beginnings of liking in her heart, if her parents would have but accepted that pure yet painful offering. Then, when this morning light fades—when the helpless creature is caught into the vortex which is to swallow her up—the reader can see the chill that comes upon the opening flower, can see the soft virginal husks closing up over the arrested bud; and then the drooping and the fading, and sudden bursting forth by its side of the other development, which is so different, so consistent and inconsistent with the first promise of the outraged life.

"This conception stands by itself amid all the conceptions of genius. No Greek, no Italian, no English poet has painted such a figure in the great picture-gallery which is common to the world. Neither ancient nor modern woman has ever stood before us thus, pale and splendid in the shame which is not hers, sweet soul, though it kills her. Almost every other victim shrinks and burns with the stain of her own fault; and even Lucretia herself, if more awful, is less womanly, less tender, less sweet, than the maiden creature in whom nature and religion reassert their rights after the first moment of frenzy; who calls for no vengeance, and can accept no expiation, and dies smiling, of no external wound, but only by the deadly puncture of the shame itself, making all other daggers unnecessary."

It is at least possible that the writer of such a passage as this had in her the power which, under favourable circumstances, would have produced a really great book. If so, we can but lament the necessity which condemned her to write so rapidly that she always fell short of high achievement, while we admire the courage which obeyed the call of duty without murmuring, and sacrificed fame to the higher claims of motherhood.

The later female writers of fiction have been innumerable, but it would be tedious and would serve no good purpose to name them. Some of them have been acclaimed as writers of genius. But if the excessive output of fiction be an evil it carries its own cure. The fame of the writers of this year is as effectually buried by that of the next as one shower of autumn leaves is by another.

CHAPTER IV

THE LATER FICTION

THE fictitious literature of the latter half of the nineteenth century has been so unmanageably voluminous and so diversified in character that probably no other subject in literature is less susceptible of satisfactory treatment. Still, if the eye be fixed steadily upon a few of the leaders only, and the great mass of purveyors of that purely ephemeral stuff which is not literature at all be rigidly excluded, certain general tendencies may be detected. They have been in part already revealed in the chapter on women novelists, the greatest of whom were all of date subsequent to Dickens and Thackeray. The line of the historical novel continues unbroken; but it undergoes another change, reverting once again to something more closely akin to the Waverley Novels than is *Esmond* or *The Tale of Two Cities*. Dickens and Thackeray, as we have seen, were not attracted by the Middle Ages; but *The Cloister and the Hearth* and *Hereward* and *Romola* prove the interest of their writers in the more distant past. Still more significant were the extraordinary judgments passed upon *The Heir of Redclyffe*, to which reference was made in the last chapter. Yet the use which Reade and Kingsley and George Eliot made of history was not exactly that which Scott made of it. There is less romance and there is a more laborious realism in these novels than in Scott's; but whether there is more that is artistically valuable is not quite so certain. To Scott, all history is picturesque; life is full of incidents and adventure,

whether the scene be laid in the time of Richard I, or in that of George II, in England, or in Scotland, or in France; and accuracy of detail is superlatively unimportant, because he never takes himself very seriously as an author. He piqued himself more, as he phrased it, on his compositions for manure than on any other compositions to which he was ever accessary.

But the turn of the century was a very strenuous and serious period; and south as well as north of the Tweed men joked with difficulty. Even Ireland ceased to produce wits and humourists; and, as all who know the country agree, the gaiety of the nation was permanently eclipsed by the great famine. The spirit of the age demanded of the novelists that they should be learned, profound, thoughtful, philosophic, teachers and guides of the people. This mood of mind produced its effect: the historical novelist had at least to appear high-built in his learning. He might study a library of books, as Charles Reade did for *The Cloister and the Hearth*; or he might follow the example of George Eliot, who not only read widely, but even spent six weeks at Florence in order to learn what manner of men and women dwelt there. The reader's gravity may be in some danger when he is asked to sympathise with her disappointment on finding that, even after all this care, she was not quite at home with them. Owing to the prevalence of this spirit, *Hypatia* is crammed with the Alexandrian philosophy, *Romola* is full of the attempt at religious reform associated with the name of Savonarola, and even Reade, lover of the drama and of action as he was, feels it his duty to lay bare before the reader the springs of the Protestant Reformation and of humanism. Later still, this phase in turn passes away, and in such works as R. L. Stevenson's *Kidnapped* and *The Master of Ballantrae* and *Weir of Hermiston*, there is a reversion to something more in the spirit of Scott.

After Scott we see even in the historical novel traces of the tendency to realism. But the taste for realism was more easily gratified by fiction of a different sort; and accordingly, though the historical novel survived, the works of this type bore a diminishing proportion to the whole. The most learned and the most laborious of writers could never reconstruct a past age;

the most unsparing toil and the widest reading could not teach him as much about the past as he could learn concerning his own day by simply looking around him. The novel of contemporary life is the natural outcome of the spirit of realism. Realism led to its revival, and the discovery of its immense scope and the possibilities it opened for variety of treatment tended to increase its vogue. Example conduced towards the same result. Just as the earlier writers followed Scott, so their successors followed Thackeray, and copied the realistic parts of Dickens.

The varieties of the novel of contemporary life are almost endless; and the realism which nearly always characterises it more or less may be coloured by sentiment, as in *John Halifax, Gentleman*; or almost overlaid by romance, as in *The Heir of Redclyffe*; or it may be veiled by sarcasm, as in the works of Laurence Oliphant; or the experience may be so *outré*, like that recorded in the writings of George Borrow, as to be hardly recognisable as a phase of modern life; or it may be psychological, as in *Middlemarch*; in which case the question of time is of quite secondary importance. There is however one variety, the novel of purpose, so important and so comprehensive that it requires special mention. It specially suited the serious taste of the time. Disraeli, as we have seen, had already set the example of the political novel; and Dickens was one of the pioneers of the sub-variety whose purpose was to effect some social reform. He had so many followers that perhaps it may be well to generalise somewhat the remarks upon the subject which have already been made with special reference to him.

The novel of purpose is, of course, anathema to the champions of "art for art's sake"; but though a purpose may so dominate a writer as to mar his art, there is no inherent reason why such novels should be inartistic. Something depends upon the purpose, and more upon the use to which it is put. What is said to be one of the most skilful pictures ever painted is Rembrandt's Butcher's Shop. Here the purpose can be little higher than the artist's desire to show his dexterity; and the manner of fulfilling it is an outrage upon art, since it produces a horror instead of an object of beauty. But it by no means follows that all purpose is bad, or

that all means of fulfilling purpose are objectionable. On the contrary, a vein of purpose runs through nearly all high literature. Plato was convinced that it ought to do so if it did not, and his whole treatment of poetry is ruled by the conviction that art is essentially educative, and that that which does not teach good must of necessity teach evil. *The Divine Comedy* is full of purpose; and Milton proclaims in plain words his resolve to "justify the ways of God to men." There is some truth in the argument that the errors of these great men creep in through the gate of purpose; but how much of their highest merit finds entrance in the same way! In any case, he who so errs, errs in the best of company.

In dramatic art however, and in all forms of art in which human character is the medium, the use of purpose must clearly be subject to the condition that it does not interfere with the play of character. For that reason it must be subordinate: the purpose must harmonise with the character, not the character with the purpose. It is because he strictly adheres to this condition that Shakespeare is often put in sharp antithesis to the practitioners of the novel or the drama of purpose. He is absolutely impartial, he is content to let his characters speak and act, and pronounces no judgment upon them. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that there is no lesson in them, or that the lesson is made wholly by the reader, and not by the writer. "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make whips to scourge us," is the comment of Edgar, not of Shakespeare; yet the lesson is in the play, and the words have a meaning even to those who do not believe in the gods. *Macbeth* is far more than a warning against the dangers of "vaulting ambition"; but it is that among other things.

The novel is a much looser form of art than the drama. Narrative may eke out the gaps of action, and the author may interpose his own comments to an extent which is undefined, and perhaps indefinable. Nevertheless, the same principle prevails; and wherever character is delineated, purpose, to be legitimate, must be the expression of the character, not something tacked on by the author. But because such artistic detachment as Shakespeare's

is exceedingly rare, it is here that authors frequently fall into error, and by their errors bring discredit on the novel of purpose. Purpose is partly responsible for the exaggeration which characterises Dickens. Questions between capital and labour, the evils of the workshop and the factory, the sins of trade unions and the horrors of intemperance, when they become the motive of novels, are apt to beget characters which are rather the incarnation of intemperance, or the bad master and the unruly workman personified, than simple human beings. And so far the objection to the novel of purpose is fully justified.

The novel whose *raison d'être* lies in its plot is another form characteristic of this period and not very common before it. For the most part, English novels are loosely constructed; and English writers do not, as a class, excel in the elaboration of plots. From Richardson to Thackeray the masters are all painters of manners and character rather than weavers of complicated stories. Nevertheless, the charm of a mystery skilfully unravelled is always powerful; and while Dickens is never so delightful as in the plotless *Pickwick*, the much-debated plot of *Edwin Drood* indicates how greatly he had been influenced by the growing taste for mystery. This charm of mystery is the secret of the popularity enjoyed by the detective story; and the examples of Poe and of *Sherlock Holmes* are sufficient to show how wide that popularity may be. But while short stories of this sort have long been common, novels resting upon the same principle are, if we exclude the supernatural, of comparatively recent development. Complete mastery in this art of carpentry, as R. L. Stevenson called it, was only attained by Wilkie Collins; but, in the period under review, many others either followed the example of Collins, or worked independently under the influence of the same motives; and so the sensation novel arose. Probably no kind of imaginative work is easier up to a certain level; but the rarity of unqualified success in it proves that to attain excellence is very difficult indeed.

Among the men who illustrate the later developments of fiction Charles Reade (1814–1884) for power and genius is rivalled only by George Meredith and R. L. Stevenson. Most of the phases just indicated are more or less adequately represented in Reade's

works. He is the author of the greatest historical novel since *Esmond*, of one of the most remarkable psychological studies, and of numerous novels of purpose. Though he was never a wealthy man, Reade, the son of an Oxfordshire squire, and a demy, fellow and, ultimately, Vice-President of Magdalen College, was by circumstances exempted from the need to struggle for a living; and this is probably one reason why he began his literary career so late. He had besides a high standard, and, above all, a most laborious method. His passion for documents cost him dear in time. As early as 1855 he began to make notes with a view to writing fiction; but it was not till 1853, when he was thirty-nine years of age, that he published his first novel. The delay had been rendered all the longer because his ambition drew him towards the drama rather than the novel; and he had written, he says, about thirteen dramas which nobody would play, before he consented to write the novels which thousands were eager to read. This preference for the drama lasted till the end. He held that only genius could produce a play that would *play*, whereas intelligence, combined with some artistic gift, might suffice for a novel; and he left instructions that on his tombstone he should be described as "dramatist, novelist, journalist," giving the first place to the art in which he was ambitious to achieve fame, rather than to that in which he won it.

"Why don't you write novels?" was the penetrating question of Mrs Seymour the actress, after the author had read to her a scene from one of those dramas which nobody would play. Her practical knowledge showed her that Reade had not mastered the requirements of the stage; and her judgment is confirmed by the fact that in his dramatic writings he was always apt to get into difficulties unless he worked in collaboration with somebody who possessed the practical knack, as well as by the fact that his work always rose in quality under the freer conditions of the novel. Reade's chief dramatic successes were won in collaboration, first with Tom Taylor and afterwards with Dion Boucicault. Taylor and he first collaborated in *A Ladies' Battle*, a play adapted from the French; and the excellent *Masks and Faces*, produced in 1852, was also their joint work. In its latest form, as revived by

Mrs Bancroft, this play, according to Reade, contains not a single line by Taylor; but the dedication of *Peg Woffington*, which is just the play in the shape of a novel, proves out of Reade's own mouth that, originally, it was a joint production. The credit of it must therefore be divided.

Reade was a difficult person to collaborate with; for he was at once acutely sensitive on the question of his own rights, and strangely obtuse with regard to those of others. The story of his numerous lawsuits shows that he was combative and masterful. In answer to the charge of impatience he compared himself to his "predecessor in impatience, Job"; but the impartial bystander could detect a considerable difference. When, without a word to his fellow-worker, he threw *Masks and Faces* into the form of a novel, he certainly gave Taylor good ground for complaint. Years afterwards he dramatised Trollope's *Ralph the Heir* at a time when the author was inaccessible, in Australia; and he was chagrined with Trollope's "ingratitude" when the latter failed to appreciate the dramatist's intention to pay him half-profits—which were not earned. Reade was incapable of doing what he saw to be a dishonest act; but his notions of literary property were at least peculiar.

Other dramas by Reade which seem worthy of mention are *Gold*, *Sera Nunquam* and *Drink*. The first, which ran with success at Drury Lane in 1853, is sufficiently described by its title and by the statement that it was afterwards used as one of the threads woven into *It is Never too Late to Mend* (1856). It was wholly Reade's work, and we need but compare it with the novel to be convinced wherein the author's power consists. He himself however was not easy to convince. He attributed his ill-success in the drama to a clique of writers who stole from the French, and of critics who lauded them and refused to countenance anybody else. Reade was not wholly without justification; at least his work was superior to much that was far better received. But in the main the fault lay with himself; and his friends Dion Boucicault and Mrs Seymour were as clearly conscious of his deficiencies as were those whom he rightly or wrongly considered enemies.

For three years after the production of *Gold* Reade was busy with dramatic work, collaborating with Taylor or adapting from the French. But the logic of events convinced him, or else he had to yield unconvinced. After *It is Never too Late to Mend* his next venture on the stage was the dramatised version of that novel, which won a great success when at last it was brought out in 1865, and which has retained its reputation. Finally, in 1879, *Drink*, dramatised from Zola's *L'Assommoir*, appeared, and brought both gold and glory to the author.

Meanwhile, against his own will, Reade's literary life had been developing on different lines. *Peg Woffington* (1853) was followed in the same year by *Christie Johnstone*, the materials for which he had accumulated during repeated visits to Scotland between 1837 and 1847. His determined realism is well illustrated by the history of this novel. "I propose never to guess where I can know," he says at the opening of his career; and at whatever cost of trouble or pain to himself he acted on the principle. *Christie Johnstone* is a story of the fisher-folk of the east of Scotland. Most men, especially if they were, like Reade, severe sufferers from sea-sickness, would probably have been content to study them ashore; but Reade, on the contrary, repeatedly accompanied the fishing fleet. Again, he hated the sight of blood, and relinquished the idea of following the medical profession on seeing the simple operation of phlebotomy; yet he lamented his ill-luck in just missing the spectacle of a fatal accident, because he was convinced that no description could ever give the vividness of the direct impression. His rule was, if possible to see and know himself that which he described, or, if he could not, to converse with those who had personal knowledge; failing both, he had perforce to be content with reading. His picture of gaol life in *It is Never too Late to Mend* was drawn from personal inspection and study of several gaols, among others that very Reading gaol which, in Oscar Wilde's *Ballad of Reading Gaol*, has given to literature a picture still more luridly impressive than Reade's. His favourite maxim was the saying that truth is stranger than fiction; and his immense compilations of cuttings from newspapers served him at once as illustrations of this saying,

and as materials for his novels. One result is that it is extremely dangerous to challenge Reade on the score of exaggeration or improbability; for the events and situations which appear most improbable usually rest on documents.

Whether the compilations Reade made were worth the time they cost him may be questioned; whether he would not often have done better to cut himself adrift from fact and trust to imagination may also be questioned. He never knew the profound truth of R. L. Stevenson's aphorism, "the actual is not the true[1]." However much some of the incidents of the novels may be based on fact, they "affect us as a lie" where they stand. On the other hand, the method gives solidity and weight; and the novels produced by it, when it is worked by a man of genius, wear well. Actual knowledge imparted by long study of the theatre gave charm to *Peg Woffington*; and it was the fact that Reade knew and liked the Scottish fisher-folk which at once won the hearts of readers of *Christie Johnstone*.

Both these stories were on a smaller scale than the orthodox novel, and Reade naturally felt the ambition to try a novel in three volumes. Moreover, *Peg Woffington* and *Christie Johnstone* were alike innocent of purpose, and he was predestined to write novels of purpose. He had always some wrong to right, or some right to vindicate; or, if none of his own served for the moment, he took up someone else's cause. This predilection had much to do with the shaping of Reade's subsequent novels. Thus, *It is Never too Late to Mend* has for its principal object the reform of prison discipline, *Hard Cash* (1863) is an exposure of the abuses connected with lunatic asylums, and *Put Yourself in his Place* (1870) deals with rattening and the abuses of trade unions. For this reason these novels have been underrated by those who

[1] "Tibbie Birse in the Burial is great, but I think it was a journalist that got in the word 'official.' The same character plainly had a word to say to Thomas Haggard. Thomas affects me as a lie—I beg your pardon; doubtless he was somebody you knew, that leads people so far astray. The actual is not the true." (Letter to Mr J. M. Barrie—*Letters*, ed. Colvin, ii. 277.) Stevenson's meaning—that what is true in fact is not necessarily true in art—may be illustrated from Reade himself. In *The Cloister and the Hearth* he ascribes precisely that principle to Margaret Van Eyck.

object to "purpose" in art, and the earlier stories have been preferred, or *Griffith Gaunt* (1866), a psychological study, or *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861).

It cannot be said that Reade escapes the pitfall of the purpose-novel. So far as documentary proof goes, he is safe. He was attacked on the ground of his picture of lunatic asylums in *Hard Cash*, and triumphantly vindicated himself. He had chapter and verse to cite for all the excesses of the trade unions depicted by him. It was felt, both in the novel and still more in the original dramatised version of *It is Never too Late to Mend*, that the prison scenes were too horrible: Reade was able to assure a correspondent that, though he had invented many things, he had not invented a single horror. And yet he was wrong: he had lost the sense of proportion: in his too eager pursuit of purpose he had been blind to the fact that "the actual is not the true." The evil shows itself also in the treatment of character. Reade ceases to be impartial, and becomes what the great artist is not, an advocate and a partisan. He sinks below his own level. *Hard Cash* and *Put Yourself in his Place* are good and interesting stories; but they contain no character comparable to Peg Woffington or to Christie Johnstone. Eden in *It is Never too Late to Mend* is less interesting for his personality than for his theories: he is less Eden the man than Eden the prison-reformer. Nevertheless, if Reade erred, he erred grandly. All the three novels which have been cited are the work of a powerful intellect, and *It is Never too Late to Mend* stands very near the head of its type. The story is intensely interesting; the resources of a strong and richly-stored mind are lavishly spent upon it; and the reader has himself to blame if he does not rise from the perusal of it a better man. The characters too are well drawn. Notwithstanding the defect already pointed out, Eden is a veritable man; and Reade has created few female characters superior to Susan Morton.

The brilliant success of *It is Never too Late to Mend* made Reade a novelist. From the maturity of his mind and the wealth of his accumulated material when at last success came, it might have been expected that he would write copiously and fast. But

his method was exhausting, and the lawsuits which he deemed necessary to enforce his rights were exhausting too; and so the books which remain to notice are not numerous. Two of them, *Griffith Gaunt* and *A Terrible Temptation* (1871), dissimilar as they are in value and in spirit, are bound together by the fact that each of them was the occasion of an attack upon Reade on moral grounds. In the case of *A Terrible Temptation* the attack was not unreasonable; for it was, to say the least of it, an unwise production: there is nothing in it which justifies the violence it did to popular feeling. *Griffith Gaunt* however is a work of a very different sort. An analysis of the passion of jealousy, it contains matter which was bound to be displeasing to a Puritanism not untainted with hypocrisy. But no intelligent and dispassionate reader will deny that the artist was here quite within the limits of his right. So long as *Othello* is tolerated in the theatre, *Griffith Gaunt*, vastly inferior though it is, has a right to a place among novels. Notwithstanding the grave flaw pointed out by Swinburne—the fact that the deception upon which the story turns is due to envy, not to jealousy,—there is probably in English prose no more profound analysis of the latter passion.

There is however only one work of Reade's so good that, if it does not raise him to the level of the greatest masters, the sole reason is that it stands alone. The difference between novel and romance may be illustrated by a comparison between the Waverley Novels and *The Cloister and the Hearth*. Scott rightly spoke of his stories as romances; but Reade's realism clung to him in the treatment of history, as well as in his tales of contemporary life. It is apparent in his handling of authorities; and, considering his previous habit of mind, the success he achieved with them is marvellous. Far from being, like Scott, attracted in boyhood by instinct to the Middle Ages, Reade had hitherto been rather markedly indifferent to and ignorant of them. He was a stranger to that ecclesiastical feeling which drew so many towards them in the wake of Newman. And yet the picture of the fifteenth century in Holland, Germany and Italy, as it is painted in *The Cloister and the Hearth*, rivets attention, lingers in the memory and commands belief. The effect is altogether different from

that produced by the Waverley Novels. Scott's tournaments and fights read as if they were reported by an eye-witness; while in *The Cloister and the Hearth* it is evident that the scenes are compiled from documents. The reader can guess whence the medical lore of Peter the father of Margaret is derived, and he feels assured that Reade could quote volume and page for the inn at which his travellers rest. He has not attained that highest art which conceals art. Nevertheless, *The Cloister and the Hearth* is a magnificent success, ranking not far below the very greatest of English historical novels. *Romola* is heavy and dull in comparison. In his own generation only *Esmond*, and in the generation before only the best of the Waverleys deserve to rank above Reade's masterpiece. *The Cloister and the Hearth* is great because of its broad and deep humanity and its splendid subject. It is, as the title suggests, a story of the strife between two of the most potent elements of humanity, religion on the one hand, and the family affections on the other; and the characters of the husband-monk Gerard and his beautiful wife Margaret Brandt are creations which enrich art. It is great, again, because of its immense scope and variety. It traverses mediæval Europe from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, producing everywhere the same impression of reality and truth; for here at least the actual *is* the true. It introduces an immense number of characters of different countries, races and stations in life; yet they all seem to be genuine men and women, and, moreover, men and women of a time and of habits of thought which are not ours. Elsewhere, there seems to be a certain coarseness in the fibre of Reade's mind; here, he is refined, purified, elevated. This book, if anything, is Reade's passport to immortality.

That historical fiction was not at the time a very popular species is shown by the warning Anthony Trollope received in the vigorous words of the foreman of a publishing house to which he offered *The Three Clerks* (1858): "I hope it's not historical, Mr Trollope? Whatever you do, don't be historical; your historical novel is not worth a damn[1]." Doubtless the foreman spoke the

[1] Trollope's *Autobiography*, i. 147–8.

opinion of the trade, and doubtless the opinion of the trade was based upon the taste of the public. Trollope, who was a shrewd judge, and who had moreover already been warned by the failure of his own historical novel, *La Vendée* (1850), had taken the advice before it was given and turned towards new pastures. But, notwithstanding the trade, there is evidence that, if only it is well enough done, there is always a market for historical fiction; and Charles Kingsley, Richard Blackmore and R. L. Stevenson, as well as Thackeray, George Eliot and Reade, proved by their experience that there was fame as well as hard cash to be gained from it.

Blackmore and Stevenson were both essentially novelists of historical genius; but Charles Kingsley (1819–1875), though he was a professed historian, will probably rather be remembered for works which may be classed as novels of purpose and for a few beautiful ballads, and some snatches of lyric verse, than either for his lectures as professor of history at Cambridge, or for his historical novels. Kingsley is an interesting figure, because his energy and his combative instincts brought him to the front in two of the great controversies of the time. He was a Christian Socialist; and, though less gifted intellectually than his friend Maurice, he was far more efficient than Maurice as an exponent of the cause which both had at heart. He was also intensely interested in the progress of Tractarianism. This interest is a factor both in *Yeast* (1848) and in *Alton Locke* (1850); and his earliest important poetical work, *The Saint's Tragedy* (1848), which some hold to be his greatest production, may not unfairly be described as a Protestant pamphlet in verse. Kingsley tells the story of St Elizabeth of Hungary in order to inculcate the evil of asceticism, with its condemnation of family life and that unnatural renunciation of the world in which saintship was supposed to consist, and to show how life was made miserable to Elizabeth by means of the affections and impulses which ought to have made it happy; while from time to time she is startled by a suspicion that, after all, her sacrifices and abnegations are but another form of selfishness; her service to the poor, a way of using them as steps to her own paradise. Kingsley's own voice is unquestionably

to be heard in the vigorous passage addressed by Count Walter of Varila to the fanatical monk, Conrad:—"I tell you, monk, if she were not healthier by God's making than ever she will be by yours, her charity would be by this time double-distilled selfishness; the mouths she fed, cupboards to store good works in; the backs she warmed, clothes-horses to hang out her wares before God; her alms not given, but fairly paid, a half-penny for every half-pennyworth of eternal life; earth her chess-board, and the men and women on it, merely pawns for her to play a winning game—puppets and horn-books to teach her unit holiness—a private workshop in which to work out her own salvation[1]."

This protest, supposed to be uttered in the thirteenth century, was not unnecessary even in the nineteenth, and Kingsley did good service by his fight against the obscurantist and anti-natural tendencies of the Tractarians; but it was nearly all undone by his disastrous personal controversy with Newman, which left him a very bruised and battered champion of Protestantism. Many besides Kingsley have felt that there was sophistry in the thought and sophistry in the method of Newman; but in detail, at least, the assailant was wholly wrong. Perhaps nothing else so clearly reveals Kingsley's limitations and so forcibly illustrates his faults. There was a certain coarseness in his mind as there was ungainliness in his body; and in controversy his weapon was the bludgeon. He said the wrong thing, he made charges which could not be substantiated, and when challenged, he attempted to defend that which was indefensible. If Kingsley had taken up the right position at first, the quotations which he makes in *What, then, does Dr Newman mean?* would have been most damaging; but, as it was, Newman easily turned his flank. No other instance probably can be found of a game in which one player held all the trumps, and another took all the tricks. Had Huxley been Newman's opponent the breaking of lances would have been a joy to witness. But Huxley would never have made Kingsley's initial mistake; and, but for that mistake Newman would never have taken up the glove. He had no desire for controversy: his purpose was to vindicate his own honour.

[1] Act IV. sc. ii.

Kingsley's novels are, for the most part, either historical romances or novels of purpose. To the latter class belong *Yeast* and *Alton Locke*, of which the former depicts the condition of the agricultural labourer, and the latter that of his brother workman in the town. Both are full of fiery indignation against wrong and oppression, and both are, at the same time, somewhat crude and immature productions, admirable in spirit, but faulty in execution. Kingsley was moved to write on these subjects by the disturbed and dangerous state of the country owing to the revolutionary spirit pervading Europe and the misery of the working population. The Rector of Eversley was no poltroon; but in 1850 he "slept with loaded pistols by his bedside, and policemen from Winchester watched in and about the quiet garden by night[1]." He naturally felt that a society so sick must need a physician; and his consciousness of power combined with his profession as a clergyman and with his association with men like Maurice to suggest to him that he might play the part of the healer. What he most earnestly sought to enforce was that, if the condition of the working class was to be permanently improved, it could only be by the nobler spirits of that class co-operating with those of a higher class to raise their fellows. Hence he taught, rather too absolutely, that the working man who made it his ambition to become something else than a working man was a traitor to his class. A rigid application of such a rule as this would result in a system of caste. If the working man must always remain a working man, is the working man's son justified in seeking another career? And if not, was Carlyle a sinner because, being born the son of a stone-mason, he became a writer of books? Or St Paul, because he sank his trade of tent-making in Kingsley's own trade of preaching? Notwithstanding errors, however, and though at best they are chaotic, Kingsley's novels of social reform are sound at heart and full of life and energy.

Kingsley's method is noticeably different from that of Reade. The latter fastens with a tenacious grip upon some particular abuse, and tries with all his energy to secure its reform; but

[1] Mrs Kingsley's *Charles Kingsley*, i. 242.

Kingsley had fallen under the influence of Carlyle, and though afterwards, in the belief that some of the latter's pungent utterances were directed against himself, he avoided the sage, we see in his work traces of the influence of the author of *Chartism* and *Past and Present*. To Kingsley, it is not one particular abuse that is to be swept away, but a whole social system which is wrong and which must be set right. That is the view of Christian Socialism, of which *Yeast* and *Alton Locke* are among the most effective expositions.

The three principal novels in the historical class are *Hypatia* (1853), *Westward Ho!* (1855) and *Hereward the Wake* (1866). The second is usually regarded as Kingsley's masterpiece, and those who have fallen under its spell are enthusiastic in its praise. But there is a noticeable peculiarity about criticisms of Kingsley, that, in a large proportion of cases, the book the critic likes best is that which he happens to have read first. The explanation probably is that Kingsley does not wear well; he is a writer for boys rather than for mature men. Kingsley's style is often admirable for vigour and verve, his descriptions are vivid, his action energetic; but it is the parts we admire rather than the whole, and in time we weary of his very muscular Christianity. Nothing he has written is comparable to Reade's masterpiece. In *Westward Ho!* and in *Hereward* we get by fits the spirit of the Elizabethan adventurers and of the sons of the Vikings, but we are not carried back into their life.

What Kingsley does best of all is the description of scenes of nature. Here, within the limits of his own experience, he is excellent. He was energetic physically as well as mentally, and he found an outlet for his energies in long tramps, which he loved all the better if he had to battle against keen high winds. He sang the praise of the "wild North-easter," and he died from its effects. As an ardent and skilful fisherman he was led still more into the open air and the solitudes of nature. All these tastes and habits have left their mark upon his work. The scenery he had lived among sank into his nature; and it is for this reason that *Hereward* gives such a vivid impression of the fen-country and *Westward Ho!* of the sea. So too love of nature is the very

soul and essence of that most beautiful fairy-tale, *The Water-Babies* (1863), which, as a piece of pure literature, is unsurpassed by anything Kingsley ever wrote.

Henry Kingsley (1830–1876), the author of *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* (1859), of *Ravenshoe* (1862), and of several other works of fiction, may be briefly mentioned beside his elder and greater brother. He crowded a good deal of adventure, as well as a considerable number of books, into his short life. *Geoffrey Hamlyn* is largely autobiographical, following in the main the author's experiences in Australia; and this partly explains its rambling and disjointed character; for life is not constructed like a work of art. But such an excuse cannot be pleaded for *Ravenshoe*, where we meet with the same vice of incoherence, though in a modified form. There is much in it which neither throws light upon the characters nor furthers the progress of the narrative; and the asides are often tiresome, commonplace and unnecessary. It was a time when the novelist gave himself considerable latitude in lecturing the reader; but the sermons of George Eliot or of Thackeray are very different from the frequently platitudinous remarks of Henry Kingsley. It is clear that he appeals with considerable force and effect to certain readers, for there have been found critics to rank him even above Charles Kingsley; but judgments of that sort are probably the effect of an unconscious revolt against the inequality of fortune in the case of the two brothers—the one petted and praised, conspicuous in the Church and in the country; the other ignored and neglected, and thrust aside even by his own family. Such reactions are natural, and sometimes they do good; but it is generally the business of criticism to guard against them, and it seems fairly safe to say that while Charles Kingsley himself is not first-rate, Henry Kingsley ranks in real merit, as he ranked in popular estimation, far below his more fortunate brother.

With two or three exceptions, the other novelists of the third quarter of the century deserve at most only a cursory mention. Francis Smedley's *Frank Fairleigh* (1850) and *Harry Coverdale's Courtship* (1854) are still familiar by name, and are sometimes recommended by people in middle life to their juniors, but they

hardly repay perusal. Albert Smith (1816–1860) is probably best known now by the traditions of his lectures on Mont Blanc; but in the middle of the century he was a familiar figure in London literary society and a celebrated wit, and his *Marchioness of Brinvilliers* (1846), a historical romance which is little more than a catalogue of crimes, was a work of considerable repute. Now, most of the flavour seems to have evaporated even from his more characteristic writings, *The Adventures of Mr Ledbury* (1844), *The Scattergood Family* (1845) and *Christopher Tadpole* (1848). George Alfred Lawrence (1827–1876) won great popularity with his society novel, *Guy Livingstone* (1857); but it is merely a poor imitation of things which other writers were doing better. In the main, Lawrence followed Bulwer Lytton; but in his hero there is also something of Charlotte Brontë's Rochester. Everything has to be made to fit Guy Livingstone's physical development. He sits in a "vast" easy chair and drinks out of an "immense" wine-glass, presumably blown specially for him. In a word, he has Rochester's absurdities; but Lawrence shows no trace of the genius which redeems the absurdities in the case of Charlotte Brontë. Thomas Hughes (1823–1896), again, was practically a man of one book, *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857); for neither the sequel nor any of his other publications ever rose to the same level. And that well-known book is hardly a novel; nor is its popularity due solely to literary merit. Hughes, in fact, was the most successful exponent of the work of Arnold of Rugby—a greater achievement than the writing of many second-rate novels.

George John Whyte-Melville (1821–1878) was a man of much greater literary gift and of superior skill as a novelist. Besides his novels, he wrote verse which, though it may not raise him to the rank of the poets, is pleasant to read. By profession a soldier and by position a country gentleman, Whyte-Melville shows most conspicuously in his books that side of his character and tastes which is associated with his calling and rank. Such novels as *Digby Grand* (1853), *Kate Coventry* (1856) and *Holmby House* (1860), are plainly the work of a man with the tastes of the squire and with ample opportunity to indulge them. He was especially fond of country life, he met the accident which caused his death in the

pursuit of his favourite sport, and his hunting scenes have given him a place among the very few writers who have treated sport in a literary manner; a group in which the principal figures, during the Victorian period, are William Scrope, Charles St John and John Colquhoun, all of whom have written delightfully, but not under the guise of fiction. Whyte-Melville however, besides being a fox-hunting squire, was a man of fairly wide reading and of scholarly habit; and this led him to try the historical novel as well as the hunting story. *The Gladiators* (1863), though a little heavy, is on the whole an interesting delineation of Roman society in the period of decline.

Wilkie Collins (1824–1889) likewise attempted historical fiction, but fell considerably below the level of *The Gladiators*. His *Antonina* (1850), a story of Rome in the time of Honorius, is dull and poor. His powers were of a different sort; and by reason of his excellence in his own department he has more prospect of remembrance than many who were intrinsically his superiors. The man who does best any one thing cannot readily be forgotten; and Collins is the greatest master in English fiction of the art of weaving an intricate plot. It is an art in which French writers have excelled more frequently than English ones, few of whom have anything comparable to the "plot" as Wilkie Collins understood it. In *The Woman in White* (1860), *Armadale* (1866) and *The Moonstone* (1868) we find a complicated story, every part of which is skilfully dovetailed into the rest, while the mystery is carefully sustained until the moment comes for unfolding it. The practised novel-reader can, as a rule, make a shrewd guess at the *dénouement* after reading a few chapters; but it would take no ordinary skill to penetrate the mystery of *The Moonstone* before the author chooses to lift the veil. This is the essence of the sensation novel; and in that department Wilkie Collins stands high. He could not draw character, he painted no pictures of life as we know it; and those to whom these things are indispensable will never be attracted by him. But there is a large number of readers who read for the story alone, and these find in Collins all they seek. Not a few hints have been taken from him by more recent writers of detective stories and other

tales whose object is to sustain interest by a carefully-veiled mystery.

Notwithstanding all the skill of Wilkie Collins, it is a relief to escape from the sphere of mechanism into that of humanity, as we do in the case of Anthony Trollope (1815–1882), who, though he never rises to the greatest heights, stands on a plane considerably higher than that of the writers who have just been noticed. He can always be relied upon, not indeed for genius or eloquence, but for competent literary workmanship, for spirit, for shrewd observation and for a thorough wholesomeness of mind. Though he lived from boyhood in an atmosphere of letters and was ultimately one of the most prolific of writers, Trollope did not begin his literary career early. In his frank and pleasant, but never intimate, and sometimes unwittingly amusing, *Autobiography*, he tells us that he had long cherished the ambition to become a novelist; but his powers were not highly esteemed in his own family, and it was with resignation rather than pleasure that his mother heard of his first venture, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (1847). Mrs Trollope had acted upon the principle playfully avowed by Sydney Smith, who declared that to read a book before reviewing it prejudiced the mind. She had not read her son's MS. when she augured ill of it; but her view seemed to be confirmed by public opinion, and Trollope had to struggle for many years before he won success. "I regard the book with affection," he wrote to Lord Houghton when sending him a copy of *The Warden*, "as I made £9. 2*s*. 6*d*. by the first year's sale, having previously written and published for ten years without any such golden results." From 1857 to 1884, two years after his death, not a single year passed without a publication bearing Trollope's name. Often there were two, sometimes three, and occasionally even four, in a single year. And this amazing pile of books was the work of a man who all the while was conscientiously discharging his duties as a servant of the Post Office, and who, besides, was for many years one of the keenest and most assiduous hunters of his district. The secret was partly that of Scott—early rising; partly it was method. Trollope rigorously exacted from himself his tale of bricks, for no one ever believed less in "inspira-

tion." To him, the production of a novel was like the making of a pair of shoes; and he held the novelist to be no more justified in pausing after he had finished one work until he should feel impelled to begin another, than the shoemaker would be justified in waiting after he had finished his pair of shoes until the spirit should move him to begin a new pair. Consequently, the day after he had finished one novel, Trollope usually started another. There is something refreshing in this whole-hearted repudiation of what often degenerates into the cant of the man of letters who takes himself very seriously as artist. Further, Trollope is probably right in his own opinion that what he wrote most rapidly he wrote best. Scott thought so of his own work; and both men belong to the class who have more to lose than to gain by deliberation and laboriousness. But it is by no means certain that the system which was good for Trollope would be suitable for all other imaginative workers; nor is it true to say that the production of works of art is governed by the same laws as the production of shoes. Even the shoemaker needs his night's sleep to rest his muscles, and works all the better if he has an occasional holiday; and it is at least possible that the brain may take somewhat longer to recover its tone than the muscles. We can imagine a Coleridge endowed with a strong will and with tireless energy, for we know that men still more highly imaginative than he have been thus gifted; but it is difficult to imagine a Coleridge, however endowed, throwing off *Ancient Mariners* at so many lines *per diem*. Even Shakespeare could not have written a succession of *Hamlets*. Trollope makes no allowance for the "wise passiveness" of which Wordsworth so well knew the value. That taint of the commonplace, which is the vice of Trollope's work, would probably prove to be inseparable from such a system as his, though in his own case it was not so much due to the system as it was the outcome of his mind. He measured literature by the word, as a draper measures cloth by the yard, and dwelt far too much on mere quantity. Wolfe would rather have written Gray's *Elegy* than have taken Quebec; Tennyson would have given all his poetry to make one song like Lovelace's *Althea*. Trollope never understood the artist's sense of the immeasurable value of quality.

But though Trollope was not a great novelist, he was a remarkably able one, and he seldom failed to make his stories readable. He belongs to the class of painters of modern life and of domestic manners, in which department his work is marked by several special features. He created a county of his own, Barsetshire, where he made his men live a country life with zest and hunt almost as Whyte-Melville's men hunt; he made a special reputation for the delineation of clergymen; and he probably gave more attention than any other writer to the development of character through a series of years.

Trollope had a habit of writing novels in series, the most remarkable being that which embodies the chronicles of Barsetshire. It consists of half-a-dozen novels, beginning with *The Warden* (1855) and ending with *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867). All are good stories, and as a whole they are the best Trollope ever wrote. Sometimes we observe the character developing, sometimes it unconsciously changes under the writer's hand. The great archdeacon is not quite the same man in *Barchester Towers* as he is in *The Warden*. Trollope retains the outlines of the character, but in the later novel it is softened and rendered less blatant than in the cruder work. One of the great merits of this series of novels is the verisimilitude of the imaginary country in which the scene is laid; for though Salisbury suggested to Trollope the idea of *The Warden*, Barsetshire is not a copy of any English county. Its verisimilitude is due to the vivid realisation of it in Trollope's own mind. Long practice in hunting had given him an eye for country (in spite of his short-sightedness it must be thus expressed), which had been improved by his habit of investigating the rural postal system, both in Ireland and in England, on horseback. Few who have industriously plied the pen have spent so much of their life in the open air as he. And in imagination Trollope lived in the country he depicted, until he knew all the roads, railways and towns of his own creation as if he were daily using them or passing through them.

Trollope's success in the delineation of the clerical character, which is admitted by all, has an amusing aspect. He says that when he first drew the picture of the society of a cathedral city he

had never lived in one himself (except London) and was not intimately acquainted with a single clergyman. The celebrated archdeacon, who was justly praised for fidelity to nature, was created by one who at that time had not even spoken to an archdeacon. Trollope's marked success, in these circumstances, proves him to have possessed not only the gift of observation, but acute powers of inference. He understood human nature; he knew that the great elements of character would be found in clergymen just as in other men; he knew in outline the special conditions of the clergyman's life; and he reasoned rightly to the modifications of character which would result from those conditions. It was a triumph of skill which lifts Trollope nearer to the level of the great masters than anything else he ever did.

It is further to Trollope's credit that he rightly lays stress upon character as the principal subject for a novelist's study. He was too business-like not to be aware of the value of a good plot; but he always held that plot was subordinate to character. He himself had no talent for weaving intricate stories, and the plot of *Doctor Thorne* (1858), which is his best, was drawn for him by his brother. He concerned himself only to tell a simple story clearly, embodying in it what was most attractive in the stores of his own observation. No one is less dependent than he on incident; usually nothing more exciting than a tea-party takes place. The reader of *The Warden* will search his memory in vain for events; and even in *Barchester Towers*, perhaps Trollope's masterpiece, life moves only a little more briskly. His own summary of the elements which explain the popularity of *Framley Parsonage* (1861) forms as good a criticism of his work as has ever been written: "The story was thoroughly English. There was a little fox-hunting and a little tuft-hunting, some Christian virtue and some Christian cant. There was no heroism and no villainy. There was much Church, but more love-making." In short, it was a kind of hotch-potch; and as most of the ingredients were sweet, and some of them pleasantly pungent, the result was a very palatable dish.

Trollope's women are good as well as his men, and he is by no means limited to the type of the universally-quoted Mrs Proudie.

Kate Woodward in *The Three Clerks* (1858) is a very different sort of personage; but though less amusing she is almost as good; and Lady Glencora is yet another type, also very well drawn. Eleanor Bold and the Signora Neroni in *Barchester Towers* are in strong contrast, but both are good portraits. Among the men, clergymen like the archdeacon and the bishop, and laymen like the Duke of Omnium, Plantagenet Palliser, Doctor Thorne and Sir Raffle Baffle evince power in their creator only a little short of genius.

Some of the characters just named belong to a group of novels second in importance only to the Barsetshire series. It includes *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864), *Phineas Finn* (1869), *Phineas Redux* (1874) and *The Prime Minister* (1876); and its special interest lies in the deliberate attempt made in it to trace the development of character. Other novelists had done the same thing before. Fenimore Cooper does it in the Leather Stocking tales, Dumas does it, and Balzac, and also Thackeray to a slight extent; every novelist does it who introduces the same characters in different stories. But few have set themselves so conscientiously and on the whole so successfully as Anthony Trollope to show what is the effect upon character of different circumstances, and how age changes the point of view. It is the more important to note this feature of his work because the mechanical nature of his method would hardly lead the student to expect it.

In these later novels there are feebler strains than any in the Barsetshire series. Trollope could not rival Thackeray as a delineator of the aristocracy, and he was no match for Disraeli in the political novel. To expect in his *Prime Minister* such a study as is contained in *Diana of the Crossways* would be like seeking wine from water-melons. His natural sphere was comfortable middle-class life and squirearchy—not too elevated in position, or in intellect, or in morals, but good, sound-hearted, somewhat ordinary men and women: the heroic in any sense was beyond him; but he was always on the side of what was wholesome and good and true within its limits.

At the time when the fame of Trollope was greatest, George Meredith (1828–1909) was known even by name only to a narrow

circle. No writer of the nineteenth century stands more alone than he, and none is more difficult to deal with. Browning himself is not more original. Here and there the reader may be reminded of Carlyle, or of Thackeray, or of Browning. Meredith was so friendly with Rossetti as to be invited to become one of the household which abode with him in Cheyne Walk; but there is nothing of the Pre-Raphaelite in Meredith's works, nor does the personal attraction which presumably drew him thither appear to have been very strong. He is in a class apart. But he has supplied the key to his own mind in his *Essay on Comedy* (1877), which had been delivered as a lecture twenty years before it was published as a book. It shows him to be one of the profoundest of all students of comedy. His own works are an embodiment of comedy. He hints as much, and he tersely explains what he conceives to be the essence of the comic spirit in the opening sentences of *The Egoist*:—

"Comedy is a game played to throw reflections upon social life, and it deals with human nature in the drawing-room of civilized men and women, where we have no dust of the struggling outer world, no mire, no violent crashes, to make the correctness of the representation convincing. Credulity is not wooed through the impressionable senses; nor have we recourse to the small circular glow of the watchmaker's eye to raise in bright relief minutest grains of evidence for the routing of incredulity. The Comic Spirit conceives a definite situation for a number of characters, and rejects all accessaries in the exclusive pursuit of them and their speech. For, being a spirit, he hunts the spirit in men; vision and ardour constitute his merit; he has not a thought of persuading you to believe in him."

This passage throws a flood of light upon the writer's work. The Comic Spirit, thus conceived, is exactly the spirit, not merely of *The Egoist*, but of the great bulk of Meredith's prose as well; and the fact that there is often a strong infusion of tragedy no more alters the character of his novels than the presence of Shylock transforms *The Merchant of Venice* into a tragedy. Notwithstanding the tragedy of Richard and Lucy, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* is a conception of the Comic Spirit. So is *Diana*

of the Crossways, in spite of the fact that the leading character passes through fire. *The Tragic Comedians* is a title which might have been given to more than one of Meredith's books; and it is significant that he reserved it for that story which, of all his works, is most closely related to fact.

If all the light that can be got is needed for the understanding of Meredith at the present day, there is no ground to wonder that he was an enigma on his first appearance. The average reader thinks of him as a novelist, but his earliest publication was in verse, and his first volume a volume of *Poems* (1851). The taste and the ambition thus shown lasted throughout his life. His poetry is sufficient both in bulk and in quality to give reasonable foundation for the contention of those admirers who maintain that he is a poet in the first place and a novelist only in the second. The volumes of verse subsequent to that of 1851 are *Modern Love, and other Poems* (1862), *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (1883), *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life* (1887), *A Reading of Earth* (1888), *The Empty Purse, and other Poems* (1892), *Odes in Contribution to the Song of French History* (1898) and *A Reading of Life, with other Poems* (1901).

The very titles of these volumes proclaim that Meredith is at once the poet of nature and the poet of man. His purpose is to read the secret of earth; but he holds that that secret is to be read completely neither in the solitude of the fields nor amidst the troubled passions of turbid cities. The key

> "Hangs for those who hither thither fare,
> Close interthreading nature with our kind."

Meredith's own desire therefore is thus to interthread the two. The deepest root of his interest in nature is the conviction that the knowledge of nature is an indispensable condition of understanding men, and especially of tolerance of their faults. To know all is to pardon all. Only a full comprehension of the circumstances makes possible the smile of the Comic Muse. Naturally therefore the poet rejects asceticism, and warns the world

> "Not one instinct to efface
> Ere reason ripens for the vacant place."

Naturally also it is the union of the two kinds of know-

ledge, and the benignity of spirit resulting from it, that he praises in Shakespeare. The knowledge of Mother Earth enables her greatest to know her sons unsoured—to probe "from hill to hill of human passions" undeflowered of love. From this same knowledge comes his conquering smile, and the laugh "broad as ten thousand beeves at pasture."

It is not surprising to find that the poet who thought thus thought also that the knowledge of nature is knowledge of something not wholly distinct from, but close akin to, man. That is the meaning of one of the finest of the nature-poems, *The Woods of Westermain*. Earth is

> "Spirit in her clods,
> Footway to the God of Gods."

She is, in truth, whatever the seeing eye has the capacity to find in her. The observer may

> "Look to loathe, or look to love;
> Think her Lamp, or know her Flame."

To Meredith therefore the transition from nature to man is easy. In the poem just quoted the two are inextricably intermingled. In *Hard Weather* the terse and highly imaginative opening lines on the east wind pass easily into those which depict the men who wrestle with "this fierce angel of the air," and thence to the moral that it is contention which begets the sharpened life and develops brain. The same transition is made in *The Thrush in February*. It is made too in the finest of all Meredith's poems of nature, *The Lark Ascending*, but not until the poet has given the most strictly faithful description of the bird to be found anywhere in the English language, and one which, for poetic beauty, is fit to be placed beside the great poem of Shelley:—

> "He rises and begins to round,
> He drops the silver chain of sound,
> Of many links without a break,
> In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
> All intervolved and spreading wide,
> Like water-dimples down a tide
> Where ripple ripple overcurls
> And eddy into eddy whirls;

A press of hurried notes that run
So fleet they scarce are more than one,
Yet changeingly the trills repeat
And linger ringing while they fleet,
Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear
To her beyond the handmaid ear,
Who sits beside our inner springs,
Too often dry for this he brings,
Which seems the very jet of earth
At sight of sun, her music's mirth,
As up he wings the spiral stair,
A song of light, and pierces air
With fountain ardour, fountain play,
To reach the shining tops of day,
And drink in everything discerned
An ecstacy to music turned,
Impelled by what his happy bill
Disperses; drinking, showering still,
Unthinking save that he may give
His voice the outlet, there to live
Renewed in endless notes of glee,
So thirsty of his voice is he,
For all to hear and all to know
That he is joy, awake, aglow,
The tumult of the heart to hear
Through pureness filtered crystal-clear,
And know the pleasure sprinkled bright
By simple singing of delight,
Shrill, irreflective, unrestrained,
Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustained
Without a break, without a fall,
Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,
Perennial, quavering up the chord
Like myriad dews of sunny sward
That trembling into fulness shine,
And sparkle dropping argentine."

The fertility both of language and of imagination in *The Lark Ascending* seems inexhaustible: it is perhaps Meredith's greatest single achievement in poetry. Yet, on the whole, he is more the poet of man than the poet of nature. In this phase of his work the reader may be struck with an apparent difference between the spirit of Meredith's verse and the spirit of his prose. He who in

prose proclaims himself the disciple of the Comic Muse, is in verse essentially tragic. He writes *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life*, and perhaps his most characteristic expression in verse is the profoundly tragic *Modern Love*. The difference is not so wide as it appears: for, as has been already noted, the comedy of Meredith's prose is veined with tragedy. Doubtless, so far as the difference is real, it is due to the fact that, on the whole, verse tends to tragedy and that, on the whole, prose has an affinity to comedy. This is evident from the work of those who, like Shakespeare, are masters of both. Had Meredith elected to tell fully the story underlying *Modern Love*, he would not improbably have placed it in a setting of comedy; but in that case it would certainly have been told in prose.

Modern Love is a series of fifty connected poems, each of sixteen lines arranged in four quatrains. Strictly speaking, they are not sonnets; but their effect is so near akin to that of the sonnet that Swinburne did not hesitate to give them the name. They suggest comparison, therefore, with other sonnet-sequences such as Rossetti's *House of Life* and Mrs Browning's *Portuguese Sonnets*. But, both in conception and in manner of treatment, they have more in common with the poetry of Browning than with either of these. The author of *James Lee's Wife* might have written *Modern Love*. It has all the subtlety of Browning; the intellectual difficulties it presents are like Browning's; and, like Browning's, they are worth the trouble of solution. Each of these fifty poems dimly discloses a phase of a story hinted, not told, or a mood of mind of the principal figure. The story is that of a love all the more tragic because of the essential nobility of both the man and the woman. There is no villain.

> "In tragic life, God wot,
> No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:
> We are betrayed by what is false within."

The two are simply "ever-diverse," and their very fineness of nature makes the tragedy inevitable. A sensitive reticence raises up a wall between them. In silence

> "Each applied to each that fatal knife,
> Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole,"

and when at last they drink "the pure daylight of honest speech," it is too late. What, at an earlier stage, might have worked a cure becomes a "fatal draught." Even pure daylight may mislead eyes unaccustomed to it. The revelation is only half understood. Jealous devotion leads the wife to "'break the mesh," and the husband is left with the deeper pain of knowing all at the moment of her death.

Meredith has here and there pieces and lines worthy of any poet. Such are the closing quatrain of *Modern Love*:—

> "In tragic hints here see what evermore
> Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
> Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
> To throw that faint thin line upon the shore;"

and these three lines quoted by Swinburne from the forty-seventh sonnet, as "the grandest perhaps of the book":—

> "But in the largeness of the evening earth
> Our spirits grew as we went side by side.
> The hour became her husband and my bride."

Even in pieces which stand on a far lower plane than *Modern Love* we meet with flashes of keen imaginative insight, and with powerful and original metaphors and similes, as in that beautiful stanza of the ballad of *Archduchess Anne*:—

> "Between the day that struck her old,
> And this black star of days,
> Her heart swung like a storm-bell tolled
> Above a town ablaze."

But, on the other hand, the style is often knotted and uncouth, both theme and treatment are sometimes fantastic, and not infrequently the difficulties, like some in Browning, seem to be due to perversity.

The same is undoubtedly true of Meredith's prose, and especially of the prose of his later years; but it seems probable that the common judgment, which puts this above his verse, will be confirmed by posterity. Five years passed before the early poems were followed by *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1856), to which in turn succeeded *Farina* (1857). The latter, a burlesque of German romance, carries an interesting reminiscence of Meredith's

education; for he was sent to school in Germany, where he was under the care of the Moravians of Herrnhut. Whether he was or was not greatly influenced by his German education is not clear from his writings. There is much in them that looks like "Germanism"; but that may have been due, as it was in Browning's case, to native bent of mind. There can hardly have been very close sympathy between Meredith and his Moravian teachers; and *Farina* shows him to have been alive to the weaknesses of German romance. In later days he shows the tendency, characteristic of his time, to turn more readily to French than to German literature.

The Shaving of Shagpat is much more important than *Farina*. From the publisher's point of view it failed; but George Eliot hailed it as "a work of genius, and of poetical genius[1]," and declared that in every characteristic except the exquisite delicacy of the love incidents and love scenes—in exuberance of imagery, in picturesque wildness of incident, in significant humour, in aphoristic wisdom, *The Shaving of Shagpat* was "a new Arabian Night." This judgment seems to ignore the element of burlesque in the piece; but Meredith himself evidently felt that the kinship with the East was close, for he prefixed to the first edition a note to warn readers that it was not a translation.

Three years after *Shagpat* came Meredith's first full-blown novel, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859), which many regard as the greatest of all his works. Yet nineteen years passed before a second edition was required. *The Shaving of Shagpat* showed the writer to be a humourist who could be either subtle or broad as he pleased, but the fact that it was an avowed imitation of the style and manner of the Eastern story-tellers left it doubtful what place humour might hold in the works he might write in his own style. *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* removed the doubt. It too is the work of a pronounced humourist, and one of a most original sort. The humour of Meredith is obviously derived neither from Dickens, nor from Thackeray, nor from Browning, nor from Carlyle, nor from any other writer of the time. Neither would it

[1] George Eliot's article was reprinted from *The Leader*, Jan. 1856, in *Literary Anecdotes of the XIX Century*.

be easy to find any writer in the past to whose work it is akin. It is commonly ironic, frequently in touch with tragedy, seldom riotous, as that of Dickens often is. Like everything in Meredith, it is fundamentally intellectual. "More brain, O Lord, more brain!" is the aspiration of *Modern Love*; and in *Hard Weather* the poet declares that earth's

> "Children of the labouring brain,
> These are the champions of the race,
> True parents, and the sole humane,
> With understanding for their base."

The Ordeal of Richard Feverel is typical of Meredith in its concentration of thought; but this characteristic has not yet been carried to the faulty extreme which makes his later novels almost hopelessly baffling. His style, always variable, is here much more lucid than it came to be in later years. It is already highly epigrammatic, but the epigrams are not yet showered down without pause or relief. A Meredithian epigram is as much more brilliant than an ordinary bit of prose as a lightning-flash is brighter than a lamp. But while it is far less dazzling, the lamp is more satisfactory to read by than a succession of lightning-flashes. Man cannot live by epigrams alone, and plain prose has its uses. In later days Meredith forgot this; but not in *Richard Feverel*, where the epigrammatic style appears in more perfect fusion with the qualities which ought to modify it than in any of Meredith's subsequent works, except perhaps *Rhoda Fleming*.

Meredith's novels are usually rich in portraiture, and none is richer than the first of the series. Within the Feverel family itself the wealth and the variety are great. The characters of Sir Austin, Richard, Adrian Harley and Austin Wentworth are all masterly. They differ widely, yet all have certain family traits in common, which come out amusingly in the covert negotiations with Farmer Blaize, after Richard's escapade of the hay-rick. Outside the family, Lucy and Lady Blandish and Ripton Thompson are no less excellent. These three are all bound closely together with the Feverel family, Ripton as the boyish companion of Richard, Lucy as the Miranda to his Ferdinand, Lady Blandish because she is secretly in love with Sir Austin. It is in forging the links of these

relations that Meredith shows the most consummate skill. The picture of the boys, their friendship, their quarrel, their encounter with Farmer Blaize and its sequel, is no less masterly, as a sketch, than Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn are as finished portraits. The agony of Richard and Ripton under Adrian's scalpel, and their ludicrous but, to them, desperately serious stratagems, show an insight into boy-nature probably unequalled except by the American writer. Twenty years afterwards Meredith himself achieved a success nearly, but not quite, as great in the boy Crossjay Patterne of *The Egoist*.

Quite different, but even more marvellous, is the relation of the second pair. The famous chapter entitled "Ferdinand and Miranda" depicts one of the most charming love-scenes in literature. The only comparison possible is that suggested by the title. Both the actors might have been inhabitants of an island of the still-vexed Bermoothes—Lucy, reared in utter innocence in the solitude of her uncle's farm, Richard, hedged round by the system. All the fates seemed against their meeting, much more against their union. Richard was doubly cut off, both by the system and by his own act, from the niece of Farmer Blaize. But Meredith knew that what we call chance is infinitely various, and that nature is irresistibly strong. Chance brought about the meeting and nature did the rest. Adrian had foreseen what Sir Austin was blind to,—that the repression of the system would make Richard as dangerously explosive as compressed gunpowder. The explosion shattered the system; but the system, in its turn, changed what would naturally have been a story of happy love into one of the most tragic in literature. And this tragedy is enacted behind the mask of the Comic Muse.

The story of the third pair, if it is less charming than the other two, is equally skilful; and in Sir Austin we have the key to the whole book. Meredith does not admire him, nor wish his readers to admire him; but circumstances have given him the control of the destinies of all the principal characters. The comedy lies in the futility of his attempt to play Providence, the tragedy in the fateful consequences which that attempt, futile as it is, brings in its train. Sir Austin is an egoist almost as complete as

Sir Willoughby Patterne himself. He begins—as the complete egoist must always begin, for otherwise he would loathe his own character—by partially deceiving himself; and in the end he sees or imagines himself under the necessity of playing a part too large for him. Sir Austin as well as Phaethon found the danger of aspiring to drive the chariot of the sun. The scientific humanist thinks himself bound to ape omniscience. His pompousness grows. His creator calls him a monomaniac. The word, it is true, is put into the mouth of Adrian; but, without endorsing the judgment which sees Meredith himself in Adrian, it is tolerably safe to ascribe this particular utterance to the novelist. The strain of keeping up an appearance of superiority to ordinary humanity steadily increases. Richard and Lucy are sacrificed to this end. Unconsciously Sir Austin sacrifices himself. The respect (it should rather be adoration, as we are dealing with Providence) of those around him is the breath of his nostrils. Life holds nothing else for him. Now of all who surround him no one is so eagerly disposed to worship at the shrine as the scheming yet fine-natured Lady Blandish; and in the whole book there is nothing more subtle than the way in which Meredith traces the effect upon her of Sir Austin's attempt to shore up his crumbling reputation for superhuman insight. The chapter entitled "Nursing the Devil" shows the beginning of disillusionment. The final letter, "Lady Blandish to Austin Wentworth," shows how complete it was in the end:—

"Oh! how sick I am of theories, and Systems, and the pretensions of men! There was his son lying all but dead, and the man was still unconvinced of the folly he had been guilty of. I could hardly bear the sight of his composure. I shall hate the name of science till the day I die. Give me nothing but commonplace unpretending people!....I shall love that Mrs Berry to the end of my days. I really believe she has *twice* the sense of any of us—Science and all."

The Ordeal of Richard Feverel is obviously a problem novel, and the problem is psychological. Given a particular character set in a certain relation to others, what will be the effect upon the others and upon the character itself? In this respect, as well as

in many others, it is typical of Meredith's work. Again and again in the later novels he sets himself similar problems. He has little interest in action as such. The problems are inward, problems of the soul, and though circumstance may be indispensable, it is but a setting. There is commonly extremely little story in Meredith's novels. *The Egoist* has none worth speaking about, and though the adventures of Harry Richmond are sufficiently varied, even in these the true interest is in character, not in incident. The subtlety with which the female characters are drawn is another characteristic of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, as well as of Meredith's later work. Among contemporaries, his only rivals were Browning and George Eliot, and the latter was so successful probably because she was a woman herself. Lucy, Lady Blandish and Mrs Berry are all drawn with consummate skill. The last is Meredith's greatest triumph among characters in the lower ranks of society. These he rarely attempted to draw. *Rhoda Fleming*, a story which deals chiefly with the yeoman class, is exceptional; and characters below that rank seldom play an important part. No less than Thackeray—with whom he has more affinity than with any other writer of fiction—Meredith is the novelist of the upper classes. Austin Feverel is a baronet of great wealth; so is Willoughby Patterne. Diana Warwick is the friend of cabinet ministers. *Beauchamp's Career* deals with a peer and the heir of a peerage. *Lord Ormont* speaks for itself by its title; and *The Amazing Marriage* also rises to the sphere of the peerage. Evan Harrington, it is true, is the son of a tailor; but if the book to which he gives his name introduces trade, it is trade associated with and striving to [illegible]ge[illegible]ate aristocracy. The reason for this peculiarity is to be found in the description which Meredith, in a letter which has been published, has given of his own method:—"My method has been to prepare my readers for a crucial exhibition of the *personae*, and then to give the scene in the fullest of the blood and brain under the stress of a fiery situation." Blood and brain are common to all ranks; but we have only to think of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and *The Egoist* and *Diana of the Crossways* in order to see that the kind of stress and of fiery situation which Meredith means presuppose high position.

The really poor are too much under the pressure of the material needs of life.

"The Pilgrim's Scrip" is an interesting feature in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel.* The maxims it contains are frequently double-edged; and hence we are told that "the direct application of an aphorism was unpopular at Raynham." But though Meredith is prone to laugh at the wisdom of Sir Austin, the sententious manner of expressing it was too much his own not to be repeated. *Diana of the Crossways* gives the analogue from the female side in Diana's epigrams, quoted from the diary of Henry Wilmers. Indeed there is some equivalent in every one of the novels, for it is the most striking and the most enduring characteristic of Meredith's style, the terse expression of his keen and agile wit.

Meredith's next novel was the romance of the tailor's son, *Evan Harrington* (1861). Though it is inferior to *Richard Feverel,* the hero is no mean character, and the Countess de Saldar is admirable as a portrait, whatever may be thought of her as a woman. *Emilia in England* (1864), now known as *Sandra Belloni,* broke new ground with a great Italian singer for heroine, though in her English surroundings there is something akin to *Evan Harrington.* The book has, of course, to be read with its sequel *Vittoria* (1867), which transports the reader to Italy, and deals with the characters and the incidents of the rising of 1848. *Beauchamp's Career* has been called Meredith's only political novel, and it is the only one in which he greatly concerns himself with the struggles of party. But it would be a profound mistake to draw the inference that social interests or the greater problems of politics were matters of subordinate moment to him. It would be nearer the truth to say that no recent novelist has been more profoundly impressed by them. *Vittoria* shows that Meredith was alive to the importance of the problem of nationality. The scene is laid in Italy in 1848, and the book deals with many of the leaders on the Austrian as well as on the Italian side. Meredith's sympathies are with the Italians; but he preserves his artistic detachment, and bears in mind that fine character may be enlisted and high virtues shown in support of a bad cause. There are Austrians deserving of admiration as well as Italians, and Meredith

shows that there were such Austrians in the struggle of 1848. But interesting as is this aspect of *Vittoria*, the principal feature of the two books in which Sandra appears is Sandra herself. Among Meredith's love-scenes, "By Wilming Weir" is second only to "Ferdinand and Miranda"; and if Lucy is the sweeter, Sandra is the grander, character.

Between these two connected works appeared *Rhoda Fleming* (1865), a novel which differs considerably from the rest of Meredith's works, and which from many of his warmest admirers has received something less than justice. It is the simplest of all his novels. But simplicity need not mean shallowness, and assuredly it does not in the case of *Rhoda Fleming*. Some of the analyses are as subtle as any that even Meredith has made. The character of Mrs Lovell is admirable, and the explication of the effect upon her of Edward Blancove's cowardice may be compared with the analysis of the relations between Lady Blandish and Sir Austin Feverel. The heroine Rhoda is less charming than several of Meredith's heroines; but the real interest centres in the tragic story of her sister Dahlia, who, like the heroine of Browning's *Inn Album*, shows a certain kinship to Richardson's great conception Clarissa Harlowe. In Meredith's case the kinship is closer than in Browning's. After her betrayal the life of Dahlia is, like Clarissa's, just a movement towards death. But it lasts for years. "He killed her pride. Her taste for life is gone," is Mrs Lovell's explanation of Dahlia's refusal to marry Edward. The close is profoundly pathetic:—

"Dahlia lived seven years her sister's housemate, nurse of the growing swarm. She had gone through fire, as few women have done in like manner, to leave their hearts among the ashes; but with that human heart she left regrets behind her. The soul of this young creature filled its place. It shone in her eyes and in her work, a lamp to her little neighbourhood; and not less a lamp of cheerful beams for one day being as another to her. In truth, she sat above the clouds. When she died she relinquished nothing. Others knew the loss. Between her and Robert there was deeper community on one subject than she let Rhoda share. Almost her last words to him, spoken calmly, but with the quaver of breath resembling sobs, were: 'Help poor girls.'"

After *Vittoria* came *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* (1871), a book much more crowded with events than are Meredith's novels in general. He is safer on his customary ground of psychology. In *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* both incidents and characters are fantastic, and in spite of the fertility of Roy Richmond the story becomes tiresome. *Beauchamp's Career* (1876) is of a higher order. The main theme is that of English party politics shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century. The old Tory Lord Romfrey and his nephew, the young Radical Nevil Beauchamp, are the principal figures—the latter the pupil of Dr Shrapnel and the student of Carlyle, by whom, evidently, Meredith himself was considerably influenced. The likeness in character between uncle and nephew, underlying wide differences of opinion, is one of several indications that Meredith was a careful student of heredity. The female figures in this story are subordinate to a degree unusual with Meredith. They are probably made so designedly, in order that attention may not be too much drawn away from the political problems. The character of Nevil Beauchamp has a peculiar interest if it embodies, as it is said to do, the attributes of one of Meredith's own friends.

The next novel, *The Egoist* (1879), stands nearer to *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* in method, and probably in merit, than any of the intervening works. Perhaps, on the whole, it is even more typical and broadly representative of Meredith than *Richard Feverel* itself. The later as well as the earlier work is a problem novel, and its central figure is placed in circumstances very like those of Sir Austin Feverel. Their wealth makes them both practically irresponsible, and they are despots each in his own sphere. But Sir Austin is a man in middle life, and the problem is, how will his theories affect those whom he controls? Sir Willoughby Patterne is a young man, and an important part of the problem is, what sort of life will the nature with which he is born fashion for himself? There is not much development in his character. He is the complete egoist at the start, and this he remains to the end. Surely a complete egoist with £50,000 a year and a whole county paying court to him is destined to a very happy life. Meredith thinks not. "The egoist surely inspires

pity. He who would desire to clothe himself at everybody's expense, and is of that desire condemned to strip himself stark naked, he, if pathos ever had a form, might be taken for the actual person." And before the end he demonstrates that this is true.

The stages in the evolution of egoism are best marked by the three love affairs. That with Miss Durham is brief. The young lady is startled by the treatment of Lieutenant Patterne, takes warning in time, and jilts the handsome and wealthy baronet. The story of Clara Middleton fills the greater part of the book—first the engagement, then her gradual disenchantment, then her struggles for release and ultimate escape. She is one of the most admirably drawn of Meredith's women—bright, witty and warm-hearted, as well as beautiful. Some of the finest of Meredith's gems of description are lavished upon her, and he had inexhaustible fancy and amazing command over language. "He placed himself at a corner of the doorway for her to pass him into the house, and doated on her cheek, her ear, and the soft dusky nape of her neck, where this way and that the little lighter-coloured irreclaimable curls running truant from the comb and the knot—curls, half-curls, root-curls, vine-ringlets, wedding-rings, fledgeling feathers, tufts of down, blown wisps—waved or fell, waved over or up or involutedly, loose and downward, in the form of small silken paws, hardly any of them much thicker than a crayon shading, cunninger than long round locks of gold to trick the heart."

The struggle between Clara and Sir Willoughby is long and severe, for the Egoist is resourceful and determined. The aged and great wine staves off defeat for a time; but at length it comes. And then the third story, which has begun before the first and lasted all through, is taken up, and we see how the Egoist, who has used men and women alike for his own ends, has punished himself. Laetitia Dale has been the victim of his selfishness from the start, and his punishment is that, instead of a blindly adoring, he receives a critical and an unwilling wife. She is persecuted into marriage. "I vow," she says, "to do my duty by him. Whatever is of worth in me is at his service. I am very tired. I feel I must yield or break. This is his wish, and I submit." The

unreformed Egoist speaks in the reply: "'And I salute my wife,' said Willoughby, making her hand his own, and warming to his possession as he performed the act."

The Tragic Comedians (1880) is likewise a problem novel. In substance the extraordinary story is not fiction at all, but fact—the story of the fatal love of Ferdinand Lassalle, who figures in the novel as Sigismund Alvan. The nature of the problem is clearly explained. "Why this man should have come to his end through love, and the woman who loved him have laid her hand in the hand of the slayer, is the problem we have to study, nothing inventing, in the spirit and flesh of both." This is a lucid exposition of Meredith's method both here and elsewhere. Whether the subject be the Scientific Humanist of Raynham Abbey, or the Egoist of Patterne Hall, or the German Social Democrat, whether the events take place in a world of time and space or only in the world of imagination, Meredith is equally the psychologist, tracing with scientific care and precision the chains of cause and effect in the world of spirit.

In *Diana of the Crossways* (1885) Meredith once more, but for the last time, rose to his own highest level. Of all his novels, this has probably been the most popular, and perhaps no other has so nearly brought critical judgment and popular judgment into harmony. The Meredithian who is but moderately pleased with *Rhoda Fleming* praises *Diana of the Crossways* warmly, and he who is not as a rule enamoured of Meredith for once agrees. The reason doubtless is that along with the characteristic Meredithian features of subtle analysis and brilliant epigram there goes a story better calculated than most to appeal to "the general." The brilliancy of the heroine is another reason. She is "one of Shakespeare's women,...another Hermione." And this creature, all nerves and impulses, is finely contrasted with Redworth, the embodiment of steady sense and practical competence. Yet it may be suspected that in this fascinating heroine lies the principal blot of the book. Is Diana's treachery to Dacier *explained*? Could such a woman as Diana have done such a thing? Could she have been blind to its significance? It is hazardous to differ on such a point from so profound a student of character, and

especially of female character, as Meredith. And he has put into the mouth of Diana's dearest friend a warning to be prepared for inconsistencies. "The best and bravest of us [women]," says Lady Dunstane, "at bay in the world need an eye like Shakespeare's to read deep, and not be baffled by inconsistencies." But usually Meredith is more convincing than he is in the treatment of the character at this point. Of course he believed (mistakenly) that he was adhering to fact. And that may just have been the reason why he fell into error, if error it was. The greatest may perchance forget that "the actual is not the true."

The subordinate characters as well as the principal in *Diana of the Crossways* are admirably drawn. The "frosty Cupid" Percy Dacier is excellent throughout, but nowhere more excellent than in the ebb of what served him for passion, after the frustration of the plan of elopement. "He did not regret his proposal to take the leap; he would not have regretted it if taken. On the safe side of the abyss, however, it wore a gruesome look to his cool blood." Excellent too is Lady Wathin, "one of the world's good women." "She would not have charged the individual creature with a criminal design; all she did was to stuff the person her virtue abhorred with the wickedness of the world, and that is a common process in antipathy."

Meredith wrote three novels after *Diana of the Crossways.* They are *One of Our Conquerors* (1891), *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* (1894) and *The Amazing Marriage* (1895). They are bound together by their theme, for they all treat some aspect of the question of marriage, a subject in which Meredith had shown his interest before; and they all show the characteristics, exaggerated into vices, of the Meredithian style. Probably no other novels in the language are so difficult to read; and even the fact that very few novels contain so much thought is hardly a sufficient excuse. It is not clear that they contain more thought than Meredith's previous works, from *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* down to *Diana of the Crossways,* and it is clear that the difficulties set in the way of the reader, though they were already great, are very much increased. There is an analogy between the development of Meredith and that of Browning, to whom, as has been

said already, he has other affinities as well. Just as Browning, after *The Ring and the Book*, overbalanced himself, so to speak, in such a way that the greater part of the work of his last twenty years is gravely damaged by the presence in excess of the qualities which made him great, so Meredith too spoilt his latest writings by unrestrained indulgence in epigram and by a wanton exuberance of cryptic utterances.

The reasons why Meredith stands alone in English fiction are now tolerably clear. The obvious difficulties of his method and still more of his style discouraged imitation. The demand they made upon the brain was enormous, and most writers were modest enough to feel that their endowment was less than Meredith's. It was easier to follow in the wake of Trollope. The latter's place was to some extent taken by James Payn (1830–1898), whose most powerful as well as his most popular novel, *By Proxy* (1878), appeared only a few years before the elder man's death. Payn, however, had won a name years before by *Lost Sir Massingberd* (1864), an ingenious and well-constructed tale. He was more influenced by Dickens and less influenced by Thackeray than Trollope, and the standard of his work is considerably lower. On the other hand, George MacDonald (1824–1905) showed, possibly, more genius, though less talent, than Trollope, and, in the main, worked in a wholly different field. He was the best delineator of Scottish life between Scott (or, at any rate, Galt) and Stevenson, a poet as well as a novelist, a skilful writer for children as well as for their seniors. If hard-headedness be the special characteristic of his country, and above all of his native Aberdeenshire, then MacDonald was an exception. He was throughout life remarkably sensitive, and this quality shows itself in, and imparts a charm to, both his prose and his verse. His life illustrates one of the difficulties of the age. For a short time he was minister of the Congregational Church of Arundel; but the religion of this most religious man was not of the brand which suited his flock: it was intimated to him that his preaching was not sufficiently orthodox, and he resigned. Thenceforward he was a man of letters; but, as his biographer indicates, he never ceased to be, in every sense of the word, a preacher, and every book, nay almost every

page he wrote, bears witness to the depth and sincerity of his faith.

MacDonald's earliest publications were poetical; but three years after his dramatic poem, *Within and Without* (1855), he made his *début* in the realm of prose with *Phantastes, a Faerie Romance* (1858). In the graceful fancy, the sensitiveness to nature and the mysticism of this book many will see the working of the Celtic spirit. And none had better right to exhibit it than MacDonald; for he was sprung from the Macdonalds of Glencoe, and more than once in his writings he shows that his imagination had brooded over their tragic story. His true entry into literature, however, may be dated at the publication of *David Elginbrod* (1863), the first of a series of masterly studies of Scottish life, and especially the life of the north-eastern counties of Scotland. The chief works of the series are *Alec Forbes* (1865), *Robert Falconer* (1868), *Malcolm* (1875) with its sequel *The Marquis of Lossie* (1877), *Sir Gibbie* (1879) and *Donal Grant* (1883). The third, *Robert Falconer*, is easily the best of all the books MacDonald ever wrote. Elsewhere, perhaps, he shows power as great, but nowhere else is he so easily great, so varied and so uniformly successful in his aim. Throughout all the novels the delineations of Scottish character are excellent. Sometimes the story is forced, unnatural and improbable; but the faults are always redeemed by some piece of admirable portraiture. David Elginbrod, Alec Forbes and Annie, Mrs Malison, Robert Falconer and Shargar, Mrs Falconer and Dr Anderson, have all the stamp of reality.

In these Scottish stories the poetry of MacDonald's nature is neither wasted nor in abeyance. It supplies the background to the story, and it suffuses nearly all the leading characters. Its effect is seen if we compare the life delineated by him with that which the pages of Galt reveal, or with that which MacDonald's contemporary and fellow-Aberdonian, William Alexander, depicts in *Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk*. The life is hard and bare in *Alec Forbes* and in *David Elginbrod* as well as in *Johnny Gibb*, but there is a glow of romance in the former which would be utterly out of keeping in the last. There could be no analogue in Alexander's work to the blind piper in *Malcolm*. Whether this is

or is not the Celtic element is, if not immaterial, at any rate of secondary importance. What is of real moment is the fact that it is there, and that its presence stamps MacDonald as akin to Scott and Stevenson rather than to Galt and Alexander. Yet there is a wide difference. Scott and Stevenson were born story-tellers; MacDonald was by nature a preacher. His stories are often clumsy and are never the *raison d'être* of his novels. It is the moral he can convey or the religion he can teach that he values. And this is at once his strength and his weakness; for, though the artist is occasionally lost in the preacher, the earnestness of purpose imparts a dignity which otherwise could not have been attained.

MacDonald, like Scott himself, was induced by the desire for variety to turn from Scottish to English themes. But *caelum non animum mutant*: *Thomas Wingfold* (1876) and its sequel *Paul Faber* (1879) are compounded of exactly the same ingredients as the Scottish stories and are no less pervaded with religion; while *Lilith* (1895) is still mystical enough to proclaim the author a Celt of the Celts. But his genius fades from the English stories. The life MacDonald knew in childhood and the scenery which was most deeply impressed upon his imagination, as well as the dogma from which he shook himself free, were the indispensable conditions to his best work. There is, superficially, a good deal of variety in his work, yet few men of equal genius are more narrowly circumscribed. Galt is not more closely identified with Ayrshire, Mrs Gaskell with Lancashire and Cheshire, Mary Wilkins with New England, or Mr Barrie with Kirriemuir, than is MacDonald with Aberdeenshire. It might be imagined that he was born to give a place in literature to a district which has been wonderfully prolific of talent, but which has not been consecrated by imagination as Ayrshire was by the poems of Burns, the Borders by the ballads, and nearly every nook of Scotland, except that north-eastern corner, by the comprehensive genius of Scott.

Something akin to the Celtic element in MacDonald is to be found in the work of William Sharp (1856–1905), poet, biographer and critic, who concealed his identity as a romancer and student of Celtic folk-lore under the pseudonym of Fiona Macleod. As a

poet, Sharp belonged to the Neo-pre-Raphaelite school and was much influenced by his association with Rossetti. But although no reader of his *Motherhood* will deny that Sharp was a true, if not a very original, poet, his most memorable works are those prose tales which he published pseudonymously. How a man born and bred in the Lowlands, among the prosaic thread-mills of Paisley, acquired not only his feeling for West Highland scenery, but his knowledge of the language, life and heart of the Highland Celt, is an enigma; but those mystical books, *The Dominion of Dreams* (1895), *The Sin-Eater* (1899) and the numerous short tales which made the name of Fiona Macleod widely popular, are the guarantee that he possessed both. A novelist in the ordinary sense Sharp was not. There is no evidence of power of construction in the books of Fiona Macleod, nor do they, properly speaking, delineate character. But whatever is superstitious, uncanny, mystical, Sharp seems to have comprehended and sympathised with. This is the backbone of all his tales and romances. They aim at producing one effect, and they cannot rival those more complex works, like MacDonald's, in which mysticism is merely one of many elements.

For about a quarter of a century after he won success, Anthony Trollope was, not by any means the greatest of English novelists, but the one most typical of his time. The novel of manners held sway, and the Philistine strain in Trollope was in harmony with the taste of the British Philistine. But there were always other elements and other tastes; and the most important point to notice in the close of the period is the re-emergence of romance. It is present in Blackmore, it is a factor in the work of William Black, it colours the novels of Besant and Rice, and it is the essence of those of R. L. Stevenson—by far the greatest of the new romantic school.

Richard Blackmore (1825–1900) may be regarded, like Thomas Hughes, as practically a man of one book; for, though he himself preferred *The Maid of Sker* (1872), his influence was exercised through *Lorna Doone* (1869), and so long as his name is remembered, it will live because of that romance, which is certainly among the foremost historical romances of the last half-

century—inferior to *Esmond*, *The Cloister and the Hearth* and *Weir of Hermiston*, but not obviously inferior to anything else of that sort in the period. There is a sense of amplitude and roominess about the book, which seems somehow to be associated with the gigantic body of the hero; but yet it is in no sense a deification of mere force; and the great John Ridd himself is more remarkable for his moral qualities, his gentleness and his kindness, than for his immense strength. *Lorna Doone* bears traces of Reade, but it contains elements of reviving romance to which Reade was a stranger.

The connexion of Blackmore and Blackmore's masterpiece with Devon suggests the mention along with his of the name of a much younger and yet contemporary writer. The "marvellous boy," Oliver Madox Brown (1855–1874), though a Londoner by birth, has in the title of the best of his writings entwined his name with Devon, "the dwale bluth" being the Devonian name of the deadly nightshade. He is like Arthur Hallam for early promise and for unfulfilled renown, he resembles Keats in that his death was said to have been hastened by unjust criticism. But in truth Oliver Madox Brown was unique. Short as was the life of Arthur Hallam, it was three years longer than Brown's span; and in the *Remains* of the elder there is no such evidence of high imaginative endowment as in the writings and fragments left by the son of the famous artist. It is quite possible that more was buried in that early grave than in any other except the grave of Chatterton himself.

Romance appears in the novels of William Black (1841–1898) under a different aspect from that which it wears in *Lorna Doone*. Though Black was about sixteen years younger than Blackmore, he made his name in literature almost immediately after the publication of *Lorna Doone*. In Blackmore, romance is associated with history; in Black, it is a sentiment clinging to a place and a people. Probably Black's best work is *A Daughter of Heth* (1871), the scene of which is laid in lowland Scotland, and the effect is produced mainly by the humorous delineation of the minister's family; but his name is far more closely identified with the West Highlands and especially with the Hebrides, and his

most characteristic book is the pretty tale *A Princess of Thule* (1873). Black is never profound; he has written no book of the calibre of *Lorna Doone*; he soon, in a sense, wrote himself out, so that readers could too easily guess what would be the constituents of a story bearing his name; and sometimes his sentiment passes into sentimentality. But he is as wholesome as Trollope; and the difference of his matter and manner helps to explain the decline in Trollope's popularity during his later years.

Yet another phase of the same change is apparent in the work of Walter Besant (1836–1901) and James Rice (1843–1882), whose partnership down to the death of the latter recalls to mind the more famous partnership of two much greater men, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher. In Besant's *Dorothy Forster* (1884), we are, by the historical setting, reminded of books like *Lorna Doone*; but though Besant several times went into the past for his subjects and worked a good deal with documents, he and Rice on the whole figure rather as novelists of contemporary manners and are of the school of Trollope, with just an indefinable flavour added from the new spirit of romance. *Ready Money Mortiboy* (1872) and *The Golden Butterfly* (1876) are favourable specimens of the work of the partnership; *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882) and *The Children of Gibeon* (1886) may be taken as representing Besant's own work. The former produced an immense effect by its description of the life of East London, and the People's Palace there is a memorial of its influence. Again the work is good, but again it falls short of genius.

The man among the later romancers who is likely longest to escape oblivion is Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), who for several reasons is one of the most interesting as well as one of the most conspicuous figures in our later literature. No man in the latter half of the nineteenth century was more deeply imbued with the spirit of letters, none pursued his calling as a writer with more singleness of mind. Sprung from a family of civil engineers and set apart to follow in their steps, Stevenson was, from the first, like the "clerk foredoomed his father's soul to cross." It was nature that made him a man of letters. Though the power of

expression did not come without effort, the effort to attain it was to him pleasure, and effort of any other sort was intolerably irksome. His experiences therefore in the train of his father among the Northern Lights were valuable to him not for the purposes of engineering, but because they brought him into contact with wild nature, and taught him that lore of the Highlands and the Highlanders which was so well used afterwards in *Kidnapped*. Possibly too the surges of Skerryvore may have left their tone in the stormier passages of his eloquent prose: at any rate, the sea and the mountain wielded that power over him through life which they rarely acquire except over those who have felt their charm in boyhood.

Stevenson's practically-minded father was bitterly disappointed by his son's rejection of the profession of engineering in favour of one so vague and unpromising as the career of letters. It was not merely that the career was unpromising in the financial sense: the mind of Thomas Stevenson, though not destitute of taste, had a matter-of-fact strain which was alien from literature. Father and son spent whole afternoons by the Border rivers, the former looking upon them as "a chequer-board of lively forces," the latter as "a pretty and various spectacle[1]." And it is said that when the plot of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* was explained to him, the old man's comment was: "The man's a fool: the thing's no possible." But he was still more deeply grieved by the opinions on religion which his son began to entertain, and was obliged unwillingly to express. To a great proportion of the more thoughtful among the younger generation of Scots, much of the old Presbyterian faith had become incredible; and R. L. Stevenson was among those who had thus drifted away from the ancestral creed. At an early age he had formed opinions which, to Presbyterians of the old school, seemed shocking and dangerous. But they were certainly not ignoble. Stevenson's letters, though they are among the epistolary gems of literature, contain no passage more lofty and beautiful than that addressed to Mr E. Gosse in which he states his belief about the ultimate destiny of man:—

"Yes, if I could believe in the immortality business, the world

[1] *Life of Stevenson*, i. 73.

would indeed be too good to be true; but we were put here to do what service we can, for honour and not for hire: the sods cover us, and the worm that never dies, the conscience, sleeps well at last; these are the wages, besides what we receive so lavishly day by day; and they are enough for a man who knows his own frailty and sees all things in the proportion of reality. The soul of piety was killed long ago by that idea of reward. Nor is happiness, whether eternal or temporal, the reward that mankind seeks. Happinesses are but his wayside campings; his soul is in the journey; he was born for the struggle, and only tastes his life in effort and on the condition that he is opposed. How, then, is such a creature, so fiery, so pugnacious, so made up of discontent and aspiration, and such noble and uneasy passions—how can he be rewarded but by rest? I would not say it aloud, for man's cherished belief is that he loves that happiness which he continually spurns and passes by; and this belief in some ulterior happiness exactly fits him. He does not require to stop and taste it; he can be about the rugged and bitter business where his heart lies; and yet he can tell himself this fairy-tale of an eternal tea-party, and enjoy the notion that he is both himself and something else; and that his friends will yet meet him, all ironed out and emasculate, and still be lovable—as if love did not live in the faults of the beloved only, and draw its breath in an unbroken round of forgiveness! But the truth is, we must fight until we die; and when we die there can be no quiet for mankind but complete resumption into—what?—God, let us say—when all these desperate tricks will be spellbound at last[1]."

This passage was written long after the period of estrangement between parents and son, when Stevenson's heart was stirred by the death of his friend Fleeming Jenkin; but it clearly indicates the nature of the difficulties which, in addition to that of the choice of a profession, brought about the estrangement; and from the beautiful epitaph which he himself wrote, and which is inscribed upon his grave, it would seem that to the end

[1] *Letters to his Family and Friends*, ii. 13–14.

he retained this conviction that sound sleep after life's fitful fever is the best reward :—

"Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

"This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."

Stevenson bore himself admirably in the crisis, recognising that his parents suffered more than himself. "Here," he writes to his friend Charles Baxter, "is a good heavy cross with a vengeance, and all rough with rusty nails that tear your fingers, only it is not I that have to carry it alone; I hold the light end, but the heavy burden falls on these two[1]." But notwithstanding good sense and mutual forbearance, there was a period of painful friction, which helped to drive Stevenson out into the world. It was however ill-health that finally severed him from his home; but that same ill-health fortunately closed the breach which had divided the son from the father, and they remained the best of friends till the death of the latter.

Stevenson's life was for years a gallant fight against poverty as well as against illness; for he was of a sturdily independent spirit, and, having rejected the profession his father chose for him, he was all the more determined to support himself in that of his own selection. The combination of frugality, industry and genius would soon have made him successful but for the wretched health which repeatedly disabled him for work while it multiplied his expenses. Several times he seemed at the point of death; and those voyages in the Pacific, which resulted in his permanent settlement at Vailima, were regarded at the start as the last resource of a doomed man. They added fully six years to his life, and made those years on the whole a period of pleasurable work. Stevenson's intellectual abundance, his variety and re-

[1] *Letters to his Family and Friends*, i. 41.

source, and his pregnancy of expression, are imitable only by the scanty band of his peers; but his sunny courage, and his playful gaiety in sickness, pain and sorrow, carry a lesson to all. Artist as he was in words, he was never a dilettante, and never consented to sink the man in the writer. In collaboration with Mrs Stevenson he wrote the continuation of the *New Arabian Nights* (1885) in order "to make dynamite ridiculous if he could not make it horrible"; and he was only prevented by the illness of his father from going to Ireland and living upon an abandoned farm as a protest against a cruel boycott. Illness drove him into exile; but, deprived of citizenship in the land of his birth, he took up its duties in that of his adoption. He "bore a banner in the strife." Scarcely anything of Stevenson's is more beautifully written than the volume *In the South Seas* (1890); nothing is more creditable to him than those writings which show how he had taken to heart the interests of the islands, and how he laboured to improve the condition of those around him, and to make the islanders and their affairs intelligible to the world. No writer ever showed more dauntless courage than he in his "open letter" in defence of Father Damien. "I knew," he says, "I was writing a libel; I thought he [Dr Hyde] would bring an action; I made sure I should be ruined; I asked leave of my gallant family, and the sense that I was signing away all I possessed kept me up to high-water mark, and made me feel every insult heroic[1]."

From the first Stevenson devoted himself to style, and he soon made himself a master. "My style," he says, "is from the Covenanting writers[2]," a source where few would think of looking for it. But in truth Stevenson was by nature and instinct an artist in words, and few styles are more thoroughly individual than his. He took endless pains to find the fitting phrase and the perfect expression; and years of training lie behind the beautiful prose even of the early volumes, *An Inland Voyage* (1878), *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes* (1879), *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881) and *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882), all of which are prior to the romance, *Treasure Island* (1883), with which he first won wide popularity. He

[1] *Life*, ii. 90. [2] *Letters*, ii. 312.

studied cadences; he was tireless in his experiments in diction and arrangement; the most commonplace spectacle, the simplest subject of conversation, appeared to him in the light of new material for literature. It might have been expected that such a man would be personally priggish, and in his style pedantic and stiff. On the contrary, he was a delightful companion, and his is one of the easiest and most graceful of styles in our literature.

Though Stevenson's early volumes won him none of the fame which he deserved and little of the money which he sorely needed, they are admirable. They show him to be, among other things, a critic of the greatest delicacy and refinement. His long reflection on the principles of style bore fruit when he came to write the essays of *Virginibus Puerisque* and the *Familiar Studies*. Even Lamb could hardly put a finer edge on criticism. Perhaps Stevenson is at times a little less than just to those writers—some of them very great—who have not grace of form; but the principles on which he proceeds are always sound. Redundancy—the unnecessary word—he especially loathes. "There is," he exclaims, "but one art—to omit! O if I knew how to omit I would ask no other knowledge. A man who knew how to omit would make an *Iliad* of a daily paper[1]." And again, "Artistic sight is judicious blindness[2]." He shows also in his criticism that reaction against extreme realism which is one of the most interesting features of his own work. He found realism in fashion. Zolaism in France and tales of the slums and the gutters in England, had thrust romance for the time into the background. Stevenson was one of the leaders of a revived romanticism. He did not believe in the higher reality of ugliness. On the contrary, "ugliness is only the prose of horror," he declares. "It is when you are not able to write *Macbeth* that you write *Thérèse Raquin*[3]."

Under the guidance of such principles Stevenson faced the

[1] *Letters to his Family and Friends*, i. 289.

[2] How different from, and how infinitely sounder than, Ruskin's advice in *Modern Painters*: "Go to nature in all singleness of heart...rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing."

[3] *Letters*, i. 275.

work of his life. We think of him first and chiefly as the writer of romance, yet it would be surprising to find him *not* among the poets. The spirit of poetry breathes through all his writings; his whole conception of nature and life is poetical; and the melodies of his style, though they were produced by one who never forgot the difference between the rhythms of prose and those of verse, are suggestive of poetry. Perhaps necessity had something to do with his choice of a medium; for he had to make his living, and he could not do it by verse. Nevertheless, even from the point of view of art, the choice was not a mistaken one. There is much charming verse in *Underwoods* and *Ballads* and *Songs of Travel*, and *A Child's Garden of Verses* is unsurpassed for taste and tact. Occasionally the reader is astounded by touches which call to mind the greatest poets. *The Requiem*, already quoted, would do honour to Shakespeare himself, and the close of the ballad, *Christmas at Sea*, is magical in its effect. They have just escaped from the jaws of death, and every soul but one heaves a mighty breath of relief. That one has been on the verge of death under the windows of his old home, and in the revulsion, as they steer out to sea,

> "All that I could think of, in the darkness and the cold,
> Was just that I was leaving home and my folks were growing old."

But notwithstanding wonderful touches, these volumes can hardly be said to contain the promise of greatness in poetry. It is almost certain that, as a writer of verse, Stevenson would have held a lower place than he does as a writer of prose. The poetry of his nature was not wasted; it adds an aroma to the prose; it gives Stevenson distinction; it is great part of the difference between him and the "Kailyarders."

By beauty of style, by fertility of invention and by the firmness of the lines of character, Stevenson in *Treasure Island* lifted a boy's book into the category of books for all ages. He demonstrated at the same time that romance was not dead, and that even commercially beauty might be as profitable as ugliness. Though he did work of a much higher quality, he never afterwards wrote anything so popular. *Kidnapped* (1886) owes so much

to the example of Scott that Stevenson must to some extent lose the praise of originality. The contrast between the Lowland and the Highland types of character had been drawn by Scott before; and it would be absurd to say that *Kidnapped* rivals the Waverley Novels in sweep and breadth and variety. But what he attempted Stevenson did excellently well. The story is admirably told, and the two principal characters, Alan Breck and David Balfour, are conceived and drawn in a masterly fashion,—the former, with his conceit and courage, his generosity and "huffiness," a type of the Highlander; the latter, tenacious and faithful, but "dour" and often repellent in manner, equally typical of the Lowlander. The sequel, *Catriona* (1893), is built of less solid materials. Another Scotch story, *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), stands intermediate between these two in quality as well as in date. The character of the Master is powerful, but the whole plan is far less happy than that of *Kidnapped*, and the materials are not such as to make a pleasant book. *St Ives* (1897), the story of a French prisoner of war, also has its scene partly laid in Scotland.

At the very close of his life, in *Weir of Hermiston* (1896) Stevenson returned for his subject and his characters to Scottish soil. It was, like *St Ives*, left unfinished at his death; but though only a fragment it has a grandeur which few complete novels possess. The sombre picture of the savage father and his son seems as if it were outlined with the pencil and painted with the colours of Rembrandt. The character of the old Judge—the brutality, combined with the clear, strong intellect and the unswerving justice—is, as Stevenson himself knew, the greatest he ever drew. The elder Kirstie too is grand, and the "nocturnal visit" a masterpiece. The four Elliott brothers, quite distinct, yet unmistakably of the same family, are also great pictures. The whole book has the permanence and the strength of granite. It gives Stevenson a place with the masters and dwarfs everything else he ever did, admirable as much of it is. It deepens infinitely the pathos of his early death. He passed away at the height of his powers, brimful of every kind of strength except physical strength.

Patriotism was one of the passions of Stevenson's nature, and it is this, combined with intimacy of knowledge, which causes him to revert so frequently to Scottish subjects. Not only his books bear witness to this passion, but the thousand references in his letters to old memories and places, to the Northern Lights, to Edinburgh, to all the scenes of his boyhood and youth. Once and again he was drawn back to Scotland at the risk and to the detriment of his health; and a touching passage in the *Vailima Letters* records his sorrow that destiny will not permit him to be "buried in the hills, under the heather and a table tombstone like the martyrs, where the whaups and plovers are crying." "Singular," he goes on, "that I should fulfil the Scots destiny throughout, and live a voluntary exile, and have my head filled with the blessed, beastly place all the time[1]!" The exile, however, was hardly voluntary, seeing that the penalty of death attached to his return.

Stevenson was by far the greatest of those who in these latter days have written in Lowland Scotch. He cannot be classed among the writers who have been aptly, though somewhat contemptuously, nicknamed "the Kailyard School." He towers above them in mere diction almost as decisively as in imagination. They seem to invent sentences and even scenes for the sake of some obsolete or obsolescent word like "keelivine." Sometimes they are beyond their own depth as well as beyond the depth of their southern readers: even Mr Barrie, in that work of true genius and of infinite pathos and humour, *A Window in Thrums*, uses again and again a word, "sepad," which never existed either in Lowland Scotch or in any other tongue known to civilised man. It is never so with Stevenson. His dialect is as easy and natural as that of Burns. It came to his pen because it was the mother tongue of his characters. When he dictated he imitated the voice as well as the diction of the character, and so vivid was his conception of the creature of his own fancy that on one occasion he even looked in the glass in order that he might describe the expression of that imaginary being, and was disconcerted to see only his own features. Both his spirit and his method are

[1] *Vailima Letters*, 302.

different from those of the Kailyarders. He is in the line of descent from Scott, they are the heirs of Galt; he is national, they are parochial. He knew not merely the Scotland of his own day but the Scotland of history, and knew it so well that at one time he even contemplated writing a book upon it; and, notwithstanding his strange mistake in the title of the Master of Ballantrae (who ought to be the Master of Durrisdeer), it would have been an accurate and learned as well as a readable history. In particular, he thoroughly understood the periods of the Covenant and the Jacobite rising. Despite his heterodoxy, that "something of the Shorter-Catechist," which Henley notes in his sonnet on Stevenson, was a very real and important strain in his character. Beneath the artist lay the moralist. "Here lies one who meant well, tried a little, failed much," is the epitaph he suggests for the Faithful Failure in his last march "out of the day and the dust and the ecstacy[1]."

The soundness of the sentiment which guided Stevenson in his choice of subjects is proved by the result; for almost as decidedly as Scott he is at his best when handling the material which had been familiar to him from boyhood. He disproves the truth of the latter clause of the saying that "Lowland Scotland came in with two warriors and went out with two poets." It is critical lunacy to put Stevenson on the same level with Scott, but as long as portraiture so masterly as that of *Kidnapped*, and above all of *Weir of Hermiston*, remains possible, the country depicted can hardly be said to have passed away. Nowhere else did he find scenes and characters so well adapted to his genius. In his miscellaneous works there are many charming essays and passages the materials for which are drawn from the continent of Europe, from America and from Polynesia, but they are rather his experiences as a traveller than his imaginations; and his biographer rightly pronounces that "among the work to which Polynesia diverted his attention there is nothing, as a whole, ranking as quite first-rate except the *Beach of Falesa*[2]." Fortunately his exile did not blur memory, perhaps distance only made it more vivid, and so his

[1] *A Christmas Sermon* in *Across the Plains*.

[2] Balfour's *Life of Stevenson*, ii. 149.

masterpiece was written in a land half a world away from that where the whaups and plovers were crying.

The stay-at-home critic is probably apt to underrate the merit of the Pacific stories, *The Wrecker* (1892) and *The Ebb Tide* (1894), because he cannot fully appreciate them as pictures true to fact and life; but, according to travellers familiar with the scenes, Stevenson's work is admirably true; and he himself claims, doubtless with justice, that *The Beach of Falesa* is the first realistic South Sea story. "You will know more," he says, "about the South Seas after you have read my little tale, than if you had read a library[1]." Another difficulty, with regard to the two romances above-named, is that in them Stevenson was not the sole author: he worked in collaboration with his step-son, Mr Lloyd Osbourne. The statement of the latter, quoted in Mr Balfour's *Life of Stevenson*, ii. 34, throws a good deal of light on the question of the respective shares of the two writers in the joint product. The irresistibly laughable *Wrong Box* belongs nearly all to Mr Osbourne; so do the first four chapters of *The Ebb Tide*; so does much of the best—and the worst—of *The Wrecker*,—the picnics, Pinkerton, Nares, Captain Brown, the storm, fight and murders on the *Currency Lass*. Much of the credit for the spirit and vivacity of the book must therefore go from Stevenson; while, on the other hand, his name is partly cleared from the stain of the sordid motive of the murders, which smirches irredeemably the character of Carthew. Only in part, for the elder man and the more experienced writer ought to have seen that no plea that the scene is dramatic and that we are not called upon to approve, can ever palliate the loathsomeness of murder done in cold blood from a coward fear for the murderer's own life. There are few motives in fiction so revolting as this, few scenes so hard to forget and so much better forgotten.

Even when he merely crossed the Border, in the historical romance of *The Black Arrow* (1888), Stevenson lost greatly in force and vividness. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) stands in a different category, for it is a conception essen-

[1] *Vailima Letters*, 95.

tially independent of time and place. This, by common consent, is one of Stevenson's greatest achievements; some would say the greatest of all. The central idea is not the invention of Stevenson: no central idea that is worth much ever is invented. The conception of the double nature is as old as the distinction between Ormuzd and Ahriman; but no one before had worked it out as it is worked out in Jekyll and Hyde, and Stevenson has that best title to proprietorship which is based upon effective use: "the tools to him who can use them." There is one grave flaw in a story which otherwise would have been almost perfect. The powder is a crude device for effecting the transition from one phase of character to the other. It is external and mechanical, whereas the imagination demands something internal and organic. The author and his friends were fully conscious of the defect. But Stevenson had dreamed the story, the powder had made a profound impression upon him in his dream, and we are told that for this reason it had to remain. But there was probably a profounder reason. The dream, wonderful as it was, was but the outcome of his waking thoughts. He had previously spoken to Mr Andrew Lang about his idea of a tale of "a Man who was Two Men"; and Mr Balfour says that Stevenson was "for a long time casting about for a story to embody' the conception of the duality of man's nature. Everyone knows how the problem which has utterly baffled the thinker the evening before is miraculously solved in the morning. Stevenson's dream was clearly nothing but an extraordinarily vivid and detailed instance of this "unconscious cerebration." By its aid he, a slow and deliberate worker, was enabled to write the first draft of his story in three days. Doubtless an ingenious man could imagine other "machinery" for the solution; but *could* it be solved without machinery? If this be possible the subject is still open, and there may come at last a work which shall surpass *Hamlet*.

Though *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* has been spoken of as a story, it is really an allegory. But Stevenson was a master of the short story proper. *The Pavilion on the Links* and *Thrawn Janet* have been chosen out once and again as the gems of their class,

and if we add *The Beach of Falesa*, we have a trio which, for merit, will bear comparison with any, and by their variety illustrate admirably the range of Stevenson. Dialect, slang and classical English, the supernatural, the romantic, the realistic, are all there. But it is not only in a few chosen specimens that Stevenson is successful; the difficulty would be to pick out any of his short stories which does not show high merit. *The Body Snatcher* itself, condemned though it was by friendly critics, and even by himself, is, despite its excess of horror, a well-told tale.

Stevenson has been spoken of above as a slow and deliberate worker. Assuredly he had not that intellectual abundance with which Scott and Dickens and a few others among his superiors have been gifted; and as a craftsman he had a scrupulous conscientiousness with which they were not troubled. And yet his achievements are remarkable in bulk as well as in quality. The days of his years were not threescore years and ten, but only forty-four; and almost all the time he was fighting against physical weakness and disease. It is astonishing that in so short a time, amidst such difficulties, notwithstanding his fastidiousness of taste, he contrived to write the twenty-eight volumes of the Edinburgh edition. They are in every sense his best monument; they enable us best to understand how the owner of that frail body "laid him down with a will."

To the kailyard school belonged John Watson (1850–1907), better known as Ian Maclaren, the creator of Drumtochty. *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (1894) and *The Days of Auld Lang Syne* (1895) are pleasant, but they are not true to nature. Their unreality provoked a far more masculine writer, George Douglas Brown (1869–1902), whose early death was a serious loss to literature. His *House with the Green Shutters* is a grim and powerful book, whose harsher features are due to reaction against the sentimentality of Drumtochty. This revolt drove Brown to excess on the other side; but had he lived he would have found some *via media*; and the force he showed thus early gave promise of a great career.

Nothing could illustrate the fallaciousness of an attempt to bring the fiction of these latter years under any single formula

better than the fact that, as an author, R. L. Stevenson was strictly contemporary with Joseph Henry Shorthouse (1834–1903); for though the latter was some sixteen years older by birth, his first book was not published till 1881, the year of *Virginibus Puerisque*. Shorthouse had a very unusual intellectual history. The author of works which seem to speak in every page of the student and the recluse, he was, from the age of sixteen till his health gave way, a business man in the bustling, highly modern city of Birmingham. The son of Quaker parents, in an age when men who changed in faith at all commonly changed to indifference or to scepticism, he became a convert to High Anglicanism, and in 1861 was baptised together with his wife. Frequently such a history as this produces a deplorable narrowness of mind; the convert, proverbially, is more convinced of his own rightness, and especially of the errors of others, than they who have been born in the fold. It was not so in the case of Shorthouse; on the contrary, he seems to have learnt a larger tolerance and a truer liberality from the changes through which he himself had passed. He speaks in his letters of a girl agnostic, who "died in the service of God, whom she fancied that she did not know[1]," and he thought that the agnostic ought, in certain cases, to share the communion rite.

The works of Shorthouse are deeply coloured by the writer's religious opinions: hence, perhaps, undue praise on the one hand, and some risk of undue depreciation on the other. So few of the books which are imbued with this devotional and ecclesiastical spirit can claim to be literature at all, that believers are apt to make more than enough of the few, while the unregenerate are prone to scoff. Shorthouse however suffered little from depreciation; he was at once, for the most diverse reasons, welcomed by a remarkably wide circle. Historians admired the fidelity of his delineation of the seventeenth century; High Churchmen were fascinated by a tone of mind so much in harmony with their own; lovers of style were attracted by the melodious English. *John Inglesant* (1881) was hailed as a work of genius; but probably few critics would now commit themselves

[1] *Life*, i. 243.

to the view that either it or any of its successors is destined to take a place among the classics of English literature.

Shorthouse was essentially a romancer, in this point resembling Stevenson; and, even more than Stevenson, he was slow and scrupulously careful in his manner of work. Thus *John Inglesant* was about ten years in preparation; but it must be remembered that the time devoted to it was only the leisure of a man whose days were absorbed in business. The points of resemblance are however only superficial. Stevenson's romance is the romance of action, Shorthouse's is that of thought. He calls *John Inglesant* "a philosophical romance," and speaks of *Sir Percival* (1886) as "almost a devotional book." He never wrote without a purpose, and the purpose is as conspicuous in *The Little Schoolmaster Mark* (1885), as it is in the other two. In the case of Shorthouse the existence of the purpose will probably prevent any revival of the popularity he once enjoyed. The air of the cloister hangs about all he wrote, and the only air humanity can permanently breathe is the free air of heaven. We have not yet moved as far away from *John Inglesant* as from *The Heir of Redclyffe*, but the former is as little likely as the latter to be hailed again as one of the great books of the world.

The majority of the other writers of fiction in recent years must be passed over, though many have done creditable, and some really able, work. But there remain two who certainly deserve to survive in memory longer than most. The first of these is Samuel Butler (1835–1902), whose *Erewhon; or, Over the Range* (1872) and *Erewhon Revisited* (1901) are the product of the genuinely literary qualities of humour and irony, and betray the hand of the scholar and the thinker; an eccentric scholar, it is true, as his theory of the feminine authorship of the *Odyssey* proved, and a heterodox thinker; but a man of wide knowledge and of indubitable power. His strange romances are never likely to be popular, but the perusal of them will repay all who are interested in the workings of an original mind. Butler was more than a romancer. His writings on evolution and his miscellaneous essays prove him to have been a profound student of the problems of his time; and his works of fiction are just the expression of his

philosophy in another form. *Erewhon* and its sequel are instances of a species of criticism of society, of which *Gulliver's Travels* is the greatest example in English. The species has been popular in recent years; but few who have attempted it have rivalled Butler in depth. Still better is *The Way of all Flesh*, a more regular novel on which Butler laboured for about twelve years, finishing it, though he did not publish it, in 1884. For subtlety of psychological analysis it would be necessary to go back to George Eliot and Meredith to find Butler's superior. Outside their writings there has been nothing in recent years equal to the study of the Pontifexes. But the very profundity of his thought has militated, and will militate, against Butler's popularity. His are not books which he who runs may read; and he had not that power of dramatic presentation which induced "the general reader" to forgive the thought in George Eliot, and even, up to a certain point, in Meredith.

Equal independence and strength of mind were shown by George Gissing (1857–1903), whose literary life was for many years a struggle against poverty, obstruction and depreciation, which left traces upon his character and writings that were only beginning to be obliterated in the closing years of his life. His earliest works, *The Unclassed* (1884) and *Demos* (1886), show his full strength if not all his mature skill; but they failed to win popularity, and it was not till the appearance of *New Grub Street* (1891) that Gissing began to be recognised as a man to be reckoned as a force in literature. He himself was not wholly free from blame. The life he depicted was bare and ugly, and though he could doubtless have adduced facts in justification of his harshest scenes, the general impression was probably misleading. His excellent critical study of *Charles Dickens* (1898), perhaps the best book ever written about the laureate of the London streets, indicates whence his inspiration came. But he made the mistake of omitting altogether that which is present in Dickens even to excess, the romance and the poetry of poverty. He saw the privations of the poor, but he was blind and deaf to that which Dickens never allows his readers to forget, their joyousness. He has nothing cognate to the happy vagabonds who brighten the pages

of *Nicholas Nickleby* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*. It is the customary mistake of the modern delineator of humble life in great cities. Had Gissing passed through the experiences of the blacking warehouse, his memory would have retained only the grief and pain and misery, and all the humour and fun would have been forgotten. Towards the close Gissing seems to have become conscious of his mistake, or to have outlived the bitterness from which it sprang. Of all his works, the greatest, the most lovable, the most truly human, is *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), in which he, in the most delightful manner, takes the reader into his confidence, lifts the veil from his inner life, and adds one more to the list of great autobiographic fictions.

While the writers who have hitherto been treated wrote primarily for adults, there has probably been no time in the past (since those far-off days when the traditional nursery stories and fairy tales were invented) in which the needs of children were so carefully considered, and were satisfied by work of such high literary quality. Three writers, Lewis Carroll, Mrs Gatty, and Mrs Ewing, may be chosen as representatives of the class; of whom it is not too much to say that they lifted fiction for children as high above its former level as Scott lifted fiction for adults.

Of the three, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832–1898), who framed his *nom de plume* out of his two Christian names, was the most highly gifted. By profession a mathematician, who is said by experts to have done some valuable original work, Lewis Carroll combined with his mathematical faculty a quaint humour and a riotous fancy which have secured him a perfectly safe position in literature, because his gift is unique. No man is more original than he. His mathematical work may be forgotten, the serious verses in *Phantasmagoria* (1869) are known to comparatively few, even the exquisite "Child of the pure unclouded brow" may be passed over by many in their hurry to get at the story of Alice passing through the looking-glass; but the author of *The Walrus and the Carpenter* and *Jabberwocky*, the creator of Alice and the White Rabbit, the White Knight, the Red Queen, the Duchess, the Dodo, the Cheshire Cat and a hundred other strange creatures, is as safe from oblivion as the author of

Gulliver's Travels. Of Lewis Carroll's various works, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871) are incomparably the best. No writings were ever more indubitably the outcome of a native gift. Lewis Carroll was indefatigable in detail, in polishing the text, in suggestions for the illustrations; but substantially the tales were the tales which welled up spontaneously in his fancy, and which he told to children of flesh and blood. There is a pretty story related in Mr Collingwood's *Life of Dodgson* which throws light upon his success. Lewis Carroll had made an appointment to meet a lady (an artist, successful in the drawing of fairies) in a public place. They had never met, there was no one to introduce them, and the lady began to wonder how they were to know each other among the multitude. Presently a gentleman entered with two little girls clinging to his hands. He spoke a few words to one of the children and then at once came forward and introduced himself. When the lady asked how he knew her he replied: "My little friend found you. I told her I had come to meet a young lady who knew fairies, and she fixed on you at once. But *I* knew you before she spoke." It is just this vivid sense of the reality of the unreal which makes Lewis Carroll's books triumphantly successful, as it is just the absence of it which stamps with the mark of failure his innumerable imitators, clever as some of them are. They have not fed on honey-dew, nor drunk the milk of Paradise. But Lewis Carroll had been thus nourished and had "known the fairies" from childhood. Like so many remarkable men—for precocity develops into genius far more often than is supposed—he showed the bent of his mind at a very early age, and his ingenuity as a conjurer, his love of marionettes, and above all of odd pets, including, his biographer says, even snails and toads, all seem fit and proper characteristics of the creator of Wonderland.

The other two, Margaret Gatty (1809–1873) and Juliana Horatia Ewing (1841–1885), afford one of the rare examples of talent not only inherited, but almost exactly reproduced. They were mother and daughter. Mrs Gatty was the daughter of the Rev. A. J. Scott, Nelson's chaplain on board the *Victory*,

and her first literary venture was a volume of recollections of her father, written in collaboration with her husband. But the children's tales initiated by *Fairy Godmothers and other Tales* (1851) were the real literary work of her life. Her own motherhood apparently suggested them to her, and no small part of the impulse to write them came from the mind of her gifted little daughter Juliana. The child was a story-teller and a mimic from infancy, and the title both of *Aunt Judy's Tales* (1859) and of *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, which Mrs Gatty started in 1866 and edited till her death, were taken from her daughter's nursery nickname. Of the two ladies, Mrs Ewing had the finer literary gift. Her stories are as truly, though not as richly and whimsically, humorous as Lewis Carroll's, and, like his, they are delightful alike to children and to their seniors. Her range is fairly wide. In *Madam Liberality* she displayed (unconsciously, her sister says) the gift of self-portraiture. Her *We and the World* is perhaps the best book for boys ever written by a woman. It must have been intuition that enabled her to realise what she depicts in it, for her delicate health made anything of the nature of adventure impossible to her. But she travelled considerably. Visits to her husband's relatives in the north were the source of Scotch stories and Scotch characters, while camp life in Canada and at Aldershot accounts for that love of things military which more than once shows itself in her writings. The best of these, such as the two named above, *The Land of Lost Toys*, *Jackanapes* and *Jan of the Windmill*, are pieces of genuine literature, so firmly based on child-nature (which is just human nature in the bud) that they must rank as classics of their kind. They are moreover beautifully written. Mrs Ewing's English is based on the soundest of maxims—never to use two words where one would do; and as she wrote with perfect sincerity, and under the guidance of an instinctive good taste, the result is admirable.

PART III

ET CETERA

CHAPTER I

HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

§ 1. *The Historians.*

It has been said with truth that, so far as poetry is concerned, the eighteenth century closes about 1760; for the poet is also a prophet, and it is his privilege, or his doom, to feel the force of conceptions which belong rather to the future than to the present. Hence, in part, the difficulty frequently felt by the poet's own generation in recognising his greatness. But the heavier forms of literature do not in this way anticipate the course of time. When the classicism of eighteenth century verse was already beginning to yield to romance, eighteenth century prose was still only in mid career. Pope, the incarnation of the former, died in 1744; but it was ten years later before the first volume of Hume's *History of England* was published, and more than forty years later before Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* was completed. The great eighteenth century historians helped to fill the gap between the declining classical school and the still immature school of romance. When the latter school was in its glory, history seemed to undergo an eclipse, and it is not till Tennyson and Browning have begun their career that we meet once more with names worthy to set beside those of the leaders of an earlier day. But if the change in spirit between the eighteenth century and the

nineteenth was later in coming, when it did come it was not less striking in history than in poetry. Indeed, it might plausibly be contended that at least the *sense* of change in the latter department is less profound than it is in the former. Not even the most pronounced of romanticists would ever have ignored Pope in treating of English poetry; but while in the beginning of the nineteenth century Hume, Robertson and Gibbon were among the authors "whom no gentleman's library should be without," in its closing quarter Huxley, in one of the best books ever written upon Hume, passed over the celebrated *History of England* with little comment. Even Huxley would hardly have ventured to ignore a work so famous had he not been conscious that the feeling of his contemporaries was on his side. Not only did that sentiment condemn all eighteenth century historians, with the exception of Gibbon, but, as we see in J. Cotter Morison's monograph on Macaulay, it was disposed to include in the black list many of the earlier nineteenth century writers as well. The "blessed word" science had been pronounced, and all histories which had the disadvantage of being indubitably pieces of literature were under suspicion. There are however curious inconsistencies in Cotter Morison's treatment. Carlyle passes muster, though he is disturbingly literary and would certainly have drowned in a deluge of contempt the doctrine that history is "science." So does Grote; and though Grote had a saving clumsiness which might procure his acquittal on the first count, he was hardly less a partisan than Mitford, and was quite as blind to the virtues of those who were not democrats as Macaulay was to the merits of the Tories.

It is not altogether easy to say wherein the difference consists which is felt to separate thus widely the works of eighteenth century historians from those of their successors; but two or three suggestions may be made towards an explanation. In the first place, nearly all the historical work of the nineteenth century is permeated with the idea of nationality; and it is significant that *The Decline and Fall*, the one work of the eighteenth century which is still accepted, is just that into which, from the nature of the subject, the question of nationality scarcely enters. Had

Gibbon's theme been, not the world-wide Roman Empire, but the story of some single people, would even his thoroughness have sufficed to make his treatment of it satisfactory a century after his death? Between him and his successors the French Revolution had intervened, asserting the right of each people, as of each man, to grow freely in its own way. Down to that time mediæval theories of a universal empire and a universal church had continued to sway thought, although the facts which originally justified them had long been changed. The nineteenth century had to build up a German nation and an Italian nation, as well as to remodel France, to incorporate into its system an amorphous Russia, and to witness the partial disintegration of the Austrian Empire, because it was in conflict with the conception of nationality. The men who had such problems to solve and who saw such changes taking place could live no longer in the atmosphere of mediæval political thought. In science it is the new men, but in history the old, who are uniformitarians. The new school emphasises differences which were previously dismissed as of secondary moment or wholly ignored. Racial and national peculiarities acquire an importance they never had before. In no previous age, either in the political field or in the literary, do we hear so much about the characteristics of the Celt; at no period prior to the Victorian era would it have been possible for a great historian to "see all things in Teutonism, as Malebranche saw all things in God."

A historian who holds that the differences between the political systems and social institutions of one nation and those of another are more or less fortuitous and superficial will naturally attach far less importance to certain lines of investigation and groups of facts than another who believes that these differences indicate deep-seated and enduring varieties of character. Hume would have deemed it waste of time to spend years of patient investigation in attempting to trace the steps by which the English nation emerged from barbarism: in his view civilised man only, and not the barbarian, was worthy of attention. But the barbarian becomes important when we conceive him to be organically related to civilised man; and this too is part of

the modern conception. The nation is the outcome of a long process of development; and the rude beginnings of customs and institutions acquire a new meaning from the fact that they are the germs from which springs the elaborate organisation of the civilised community. The idea of evolution began to be applied, tentatively, spasmodically, blunderingly, in history before it had yet triumphed in science; but after that triumph the power of the idea and the confidence of those who used it were enormously increased. And here we see a second point of difference between the historical work of the eighteenth century and that of the nineteenth, which, in its later stages fully and consciously, in its earlier phases partially and unconsciously, is guided by the idea of evolution. As a natural consequence, nineteenth century history is marked, just like evolutionary science, by the attempt to trace things back to their origin. The concern of the biologist with the amoeba and with protoplasm corresponds with the interest of the modern historian in village communities and in early land systems. There are divers kinds of microscopes, and multifarious are their uses.

Connected with, but distinguishable from, this, is the profound respect for fact in modern history. Here the example and the influence of physical science have been paramount. An examination of its method shows that the root-principle is a scrupulous respect for facts as facts; and the record of its triumphs is an ample vindication of the method. The lesson, applied to history, has led to the attempt to make a thorough and exhaustive investigation of documents, and to the accumulation of vast piles of raw material, which are to form the foundation for some great induction of the future. Yet, as the piles grow, the question whence the colossal genius is to come who shall evolve order out of this chaos presses more and more, and the doubt suggests itself whether the modern historian is not a little like the modern millionaire, who is worn and harassed by the custody of wealth far beyond his capacity to use or enjoy. In some respects, modern historical work seems to stand intermediate between the facile theorising of the eighteenth century and the dryness of the old chronicle; and its aspiration is after the latter model rather than

the former. The fact is supposed to be all the better if it is "hard," and the enquirer sometimes forgets that a "hard" fact in human relations means only a fragment of a fact. We can imagine the chronicler recording the funeral of the Duke of Wellington: "November 18, 1852. This day was the Duke of Wellington buried in St Paul's Cathedral. Cannons were fired, and great crowds were in the streets." That is the "hard" fact. Tennyson tells the story too. He does not even give the date, and he gives much that is not "hard" and, in a sense, is not "fact" at all. His majestic pageant of the life of the great Duke, the vision of the spirit of the "mighty seaman" by whose side he is to sleep till the trump of doom, the nation's lament that "the last great Englishman is low,"—these call up the emotions rather than the "hard facts" of that great scene. And yet who can doubt which of the two records contains the greater truth? Similarly, we can imagine an Athenian chronicler recording that Socrates, condemned on a specified charge, on a certain day drank a cup of hemlock. Of the same events Plato has left an account "touched with emotion"; and even if it could be shown that Plato's account came solely from his own imagination, it would remain true in a far deeper sense than the bare narrative of the chronicler. The modern historian feels convinced that many of the speeches in Thucydides could never have been spoken by the men to whom he ascribes them; and yet the modern historian would be far poorer if Thucydides had contented himself with recording the "hard fact" that at such-and-such a time and place such-and-such events happened. It is tolerably certain that the fateful pause of Caesar on the banks of the Rubicon never took place, and we no longer intermingle our imagination with the facts in that particular way; and yet it was not only a vivid dramatic instinct, but an essentially sound historical one, that inspired that famous scene.

The task of a perfect philosophy, it has been said, would be to re-think the great thought of creation. The task of a perfect history would be to re-think the thoughts as well as to record the actions of those who have made history; and they are not merely soldiers and statesmen, but all mankind. Hence the illusoriness

of the so-called "hard" fact. Even science has to discover that fact is only important as it leads to law, the work of intelligence, and that he who accumulates facts is the mere "hodman" to him who can piece them together and make a dwelling—cottage, or mansion, or palace—for the spirit. Eighteenth century historians made a grave mistake in neglecting to look to the solidity of their foundation; but they were not wrong in their conviction that the building was a greater thing than the pile of bricks. Nineteenth century historians have been careful of the foundation, but, in some cases at least, they have been neglectful of the superstructure. The analogy of physical science has had an influence not altogether wholesome. It has encouraged a mistaken belief, in the first place, that the historical fact may be "isolated" or abstracted as successfully as the chemical fact; and, in the second place, that "hard" facts thus "isolated" may be recombined with results comparable in accuracy with those of physical science. But in truth, whatever the future may have in store, it is certain that as yet there is no such thing as a science of human character; and as human character is the raw material out of which history is made, the attempt to bring it under the category of science seems at least premature.

These tendencies and characteristics manifest themselves, probably without the knowledge of the writers, in some of the minor historians of the time. The new interest in the beginnings of things, for example, is seen in the rise of the study both of Old English as a language and of the early English as a people; whereby the foundations were laid for that pronounced Teutonism which was one of the most conspicuous marks of the English historians a little later. Sharon Turner (1768–1847), in his *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1799–1805), was a pioneer; and experts are agreed that in this early work he was happier and showed greater mastery than in the subsequent writings in which he carried down the history of England, first through the middle ages, and then to the death of Elizabeth. Turner has long been superseded; but they who have gone beyond him traversed first the road which he had made. Among those who followed in his footsteps were J. M. Kemble (1807–1857), author of *The Saxons*

in England (1849), and Sir Francis Palgrave (1788–1861) who, as deputy-keeper of the Records, had much to do with rendering accessible that immense mass of state documents with the help of which the history of England has been largely rewritten. But Palgrave was more than a diligent and careful editor, he was also the author of a series of original works elucidating chiefly the early history of England, and culminating in the *History of Normandy and of England* (1851–1864), in which he showed a rare combination of wide reading with the talent for generalisation. Freeman declared that, as the man who discovered that the Roman Empire did not end in 476 A.D., Palgrave deserved a place among the foremost of historians; and it is at least undeniable that he who corrected the views of historians on a point of such vital moment as this had used his learning to good purpose and deserves to be held in grateful memory.

In close connexion with the study of early English history went the study of the early forms of the language. For the eighteenth century, English literature began with Chaucer, as it may almost be said that English history began with the Conquest. The nineteenth century pushed the date back in both cases by centuries. *Beowulf* became the starting-point instead of *The Canterbury Tales*; and, as neither the writings nor the events of those early centuries could be understood without the study of what was practically another language, philological investigations in Old English went hand-in-hand with the study of the early English period. Kemble did linguistic as well as historical work, editing and translating *Beowulf*, and also the poetry of the *Codex Vercellensis*. Joseph Bosworth wrote a grammar and compiled a dictionary of the Anglo-Saxon language. Benjamin Thorpe laboured in the same field, though in such a way as to have incurred the censure of others who have followed him. J. R. Green roundly pronounces him "a dishonest old man[1]." In a later stage of the language, and also at a somewhat later date, philological learning is best represented by the works of the accomplished Richard Chenevix Trench (1807–1886), who was a good, though not a great, artist in words, as well as their historian.

[1] *Letters*, 144.

Trench's best and most widely-known works are the two volumes on the English language, *On the Study of Words* (1851) and *English, Past and Present* (1855). These have the rare merit of presenting real learning in an attractive form, and, either directly, or through "conveyances" effected from them to other works which are at least more ponderous, they have probably done more than any other volumes ever written to spread a knowledge of the history of English. Philology was in those days something of a hobby of the man of letters, and among those who showed the tendency as well as Trench may be mentioned George Borrow, and, in a rather eccentric way, William Barnes, the Dorset poet.

Philology however is essentially a science "made in Germany." Inspiration in the early period came from the great Grimm; and it was not unfitting that in later days the chief honours should have fallen to a countryman of Grimm's, Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), who, coming to England in 1846, learnt to wield the language of his adopted country with a grace and elegance never surpassed by any man of foreign birth. He covered a field incomparably wider than that of scholars like Trench. His was the science of comparative philology. His domain was the whole of human speech, especially the Aryan family of languages, and, above all, Sanskrit. But, besides this, he was a student of comparative mythology, of the origin and growth of religion and of the science of thought, on all of which subjects he wrote books. In popular estimation he was the embodiment of learning, vast, varied and profound. In the estimation of scholars he never ranked so high as this, and in his later years his reputation decidedly declined. To some extent their depreciatory criticisms must be discounted. In Max Müller's case, just as in the case of Huxley, the bemuddled and the dull found it difficult to believe that wit and lucidity need not necessarily connote shallowness. Allowance must be made too for a touch of envy of a man who was so extraordinarily successful. For Max Müller was one of those who are gifted with the power of charming all sorts and conditions of men—except their rivals. Few men of letters have received more ample recognition.

Every nation of the West delighted to honour him, and when the Japanese sent envoys to Europe in search of a religion, they went to Max Müller for advice. In the University of Tokio they have given a final home to the library he collected. There is something almost portentous in such a capacity for winning distinction. Those who stood more or less near to Max Müller in scholarship felt, rightly, that it was not solely due to those merits which are called "solid," and they were inclined, more questionably, to deny that the tact which reinforced them was only one merit the more. That tact never failed Max Müller: he always knew how to do the right thing at the right moment. He was one of the most alert of men—perhaps the most alert of great scholars, a tribe rather remarkable for being a year or two, if not a generation or two, behind the time. Not so Max Müller. A few years after his settlement in England the Crimean war broke out, and immediately he was in the field with his *Languages of the Seat of War in the East* (1855). And so it was to the end. No great event occurred, no question was broached which interested the public mind, but he brought it, if by any ingenuity the thing could be done, into relation with his studies. A man with so much of the wisdom of the world was a strange phenomenon among scholars, and they resented the intrusion without well knowing why.

The depreciation referred to cannot, however, be altogether explained away in this fashion. It seems certain that, in his later years, Max Müller showed a want of intellectual flexibility which was astonishing in such a man. He clung to old views with a tenacity which is not suggestive of the mental alertness just spoken of, but which may, perhaps, be explained on the ground that he attempted to do too much, and so failed to give adequate consideration to new evidence. It is probable also that, from the first, he had a higher genius for popularising than for profound research. In short, he had the defects of his qualities. Some of his generalisations are certainly a little shallow. Nearly all critics are agreed that he puts upon the sun-myth a burden greater than it will bear; and his attempt, when Darwinism was new, to erect language into an impassable barrier between the

brute and man showed a very inadequate appreciation of the problem. But when all deductions are made, the man who could write upon an abstruse subject with such life and charm, who could interest so many, who contrived to do so much towards breaking down the barriers between East and West, deserved all the honours that were showered upon him; and if we could wish a change it would be that others might be levelled up to him, not that he might be brought down to their obscurity.

The philologists have led to a digression from the historians, to whom it is necessary to return. Those who have hitherto been mentioned were of secondary importance: the man who at the beginning of the period stood highest in reputation, and whose work was of most permanent value, was Henry Hallam (1777–1859), author of *A View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1818), *The Constitutional History of England* (1827) and *An Introduction to the Literature of Europe* (1837–1839). And in this instance the order of time is probably also the order of merit. For two reasons the *Introduction to the Literature of Europe* is the least satisfactory of Hallam's works. In the first place, it is too ambitious. No man could have dealt adequately with such a subject; and Hallam, whose knowledge even of English writers was rather extensive and general than profound, was not sufficiently accomplished as a linguist to be altogether successful. But a graver reason is that he was singularly deficient in one of the most essential qualities of a critic—sympathy. He was "judicial," as nearly all who have written about him point out[1], but sympathetic he was not. Nothing stirred him to enthusiasm, and he saw defects more clearly and more rapidly than merits: "he is a judge," Macaulay wrote of him, "but a hanging judge." It is also clear that to certain forms of literary merit he was altogether blind. Whatever was neat in form and

[1] A remarkable illustration of the force of contemporary prejudice is the fact that, while Macaulay in *The Edinburgh Review* was praising *The Constitutional History of England* as "the most impartial book that we ever read," Southey in *The Quarterly* was doing the duty of a sound Tory and pronouncing it "the production of a decided partisan."

lucid in meaning. whatever was weighty and dignified, whatever appealed to the reason and would bear its scrutiny, he appreciated. But he was often alienated by passion, he was apt to undervalue the lighter and more fanciful kinds of verse, he was wholly unable to understand mysticism. In short, as a critic he belonged rather to the eighteenth than to the nineteenth century.

Hallam's historical work too is a link between the two centuries. He showed a readiness to undertake vast subjects which betokened the spirit of an earlier time, when a man could take all knowledge for his province; and yet he combined with this an amount of original research, a patience with documents and a sense of the importance of fresh knowledge, which belonged to the new generation. He is in some danger of undue depreciation, because others have done more thoroughly what he did first. His picture of the middle ages is drawn from sources which no one had examined till he pointed them out. His treatment of the English constitution too was fresh. But it has grave defects. Hallam had too much belief in mechanism and too little in men: he and Carlyle stood at opposite poles. How much is lost in this way is seen if we compare Hallam with Bagehot, who never forgets that a machine worked by a being with nerves and emotions is a different thing from one which runs automatically. Further, the impartiality for which Hallam was celebrated can only be acknowledged with reservations. He was absolutely fair in intention; but no less than other writers he carried his prepossessions with him and interpreted his facts by them. His five checks are really the principles of the Whig party, and when they are granted Whig conclusions necessarily follow. He puts a hundred-weight in one scale, and then manifests the utmost scrupulosity in balancing the ounces and the grains.

The value of an impartiality thus conditioned may reasonably be doubted, and all the more so because of the manifest disadvantages of such a temperament. Few men give a stronger impression of austerity and coldness than Hallam. His judgments, as Macaulay's remark suggests, are seldom favourable. "We live in a damned wicked world," said Sir Peter Teazle, "and

the fewer we praise the better"; and Hallam seems to have been of his mind. Not that he is often unreservedly condemnatory: his impartiality rather takes the form of showing that "black's not so black,—nor white so *very* white." The universal grey becomes wearisome, and we welcome as a relief the vivid colours of Carlyle, the strong antitheses of Macaulay, or the vigorous whitewashing of Froude. Hallam's work seems to come from the pen of a recluse who has been so busy exercising his head that he has found no time to develop a heart. And yet Hallam was neither heartless nor a recluse. On the contrary, he was familiar, through Holland House, with the best society of London, was one of the most brilliant talkers of the brilliant group gathered there, and had sharpened his judgment in frequent conversation with statesmen and men of the world.

While impartiality might be called the foible of Hallam, partisanship was a very necessity of the position of the Catholic historian, John Lingard (1771–1851), author of *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church* (1806) and of a *History of England* (1819–1830) which carries down the narrative to the Revolution of 1689. A Catholic by birth and trained at Douay, it was impossible for Lingard to be absolutely unbiassed; indeed, his chief motive in writing the history of England was that he might present the case of his own communion. The firmest Protestant, however, must admit that it is probable, or, rather, certain *a priori*, that the beaten party must have a case to present and is only too likely to have suffered more or less injustice at the hands of their triumphant antagonists. It is to Lingard's credit that he has advocated the cause of the Romanists on the whole moderately and well. Macaulay quotes him as an unwilling witness to illustrate his own view of the character of James II. It is true that in doing so he describes Lingard as "an able but partial writer"; and the words are fully justified; but the fact that the passage existed goes to show that in a crucial case Lingard had given an honest account. More convincing is the fact that the historian incurred in about equal measure the condemnation of extremists on both sides. His work may be regarded as one of the English documents in that Catholic revival which has been dealt with

elsewhere; but of course it was Lingard's object to conceal this purpose as completely as possible.

It is however in Carlyle and Macaulay that we first find the characteristics of the nineteenth century historian fully developed and on the great scale. The former was so large a figure, and touched Victorian literature at so many points, that it has been necessary to treat him elsewhere; the latter won fame earlier and more easily, but is not so indispensable to a comprehension of the literature of the time. As a historian, Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859) was remarkably fortunate in the circumstances of his life. He grumbles occasionally in his letters and diary at the chains and fetters of office and at the inroads upon his time made by the House of Commons; and probably he spent too much of his life as an active politician. But his sober judgment about the influence of public life and experience upon the historian is given in the essay on Sir James Mackintosh's *History of the Revolution*, where he quotes with approval Gibbon's remark that he owed part of his success as a historian to his experience in the Militia and in the House of Commons. Judged on this principle, Macaulay's own life was as well adapted for the production of great historical work as any ever lived by an Englishman. He had leisure for research, and yet from boyhood he was interested in and familiar with the practical handling of great public questions. His father, Zachary Macaulay, a man of austere and lofty character, was one of that inner circle through whose persistent labours and self-sacrifice the cause of the West Indian slaves was fought and won. Zachary Macaulay had acquired his knowledge of the slave system as manager of an estate in Jamaica, and that knowledge induced him to give up a lucrative career in order that he might devote himself heart and soul to the interests of the unhappy slaves. The son of such a man grew up in an atmosphere of devotion to public duty and of ceaseless labour for objects entirely unselfish.

Socially, the Clapham sect were plain middle-class people, but through Wilberforce, the friend of Pitt, they had contact with the upper ranks of politics and society. Young Macaulay repeatedly heard Wilberforce talk of Pitt and the House of Commons, and a

passage in the essay on Warren Hastings, describing the Prime Minister's extraordinary change of front with respect to the question of impeachment, is obviously drawn from his remembrance of these conversations. Intellectually, the friends of Zachary Macaulay were powerful, but somewhat narrow. They cared little for the elegancies of culture. In religion they were intensely evangelical. Possibly young Macaulay would have been narrowed and stunted if he had remained long within the exclusive influence of this sect. But, going into residence at Cambridge in 1818, he was fortunate enough to find himself the contemporary of a number of young men not unworthy to measure themselves against him. Among those who afterwards achieved some degree of literary fame were John Moultrie, Winthrop M. Praed and the two Coleridges, Derwent and Henry Nelson, inheritors both of a great name and of a share of the genius which seems to be the birthright of that wonderful family. From these men Macaulay learned that there were many ways of looking at great problems, and was saved from the danger of passing through life with the stamp of Clapham too visibly branded upon him.

It was not however by budding men of letters that the youthful society of the University was led. The predominant interest of the cleverest undergraduates was political, and their acknowledged chief was Charles Austin, "the only man who ever dominated Macaulay," but one who, unhappily for his own permanent fame, contented himself with the worldly rewards of an early and extraordinary success at the bar. The ambition of these brilliant young men was to use for politics the literary gifts which they undoubtedly possessed. This was true not only of Austin, but to a considerable extent of Macaulay, and of Praed and Henry Nelson Coleridge as well.

Charles Austin had already either imbibed from his elder brother, the well-known jurist, or developed for himself, Utilitarian opinions, and was imbued with the political principles of the philosophical Radicals. He greatly admired the democratic institutions of America, and he disapproved of the aristocratic and ecclesiastical elements in the English system. These were the subjects of formal debates, and of innumerable informal conversations as

the young men walked along the Trumpington road, or strolled about the beautiful lawns that slope down to the Cam, or sat over their College fires. Austin taught Macaulay to look no longer through Tory spectacles and to consider himself a Radical. He felt sure he would never be a Whig. It is amusing to remember that ere many years were gone he was one of the most efficient critics of the philosophical Radicals, and that he was destined to be the greatest of all panegyrists of the Whigs: "he looked out upon the world, and behold, only the Whigs were good[1]."

Fate dealt rather unkindly with this brilliant band. H. N. Coleridge, the most gifted of the Coleridge family in that generation, with the possible exception of the hapless Hartley, and Praed, the wit and poet, were cut off before they had reached the fulness of their powers. Charles Austin sought for wealth only; Moultrie and Derwent Coleridge belong to the lower ranks of literature; and there remains only Macaulay to represent in its higher walks a society in which he was not the first.

It is easy to trace in Macaulay's writings the operation of the forces brought to bear upon him in his youth. Though he soon ceased to be "dominated" by Austin, the essay on Bacon bears the mark of Austin's influence in its laudation of the "philosophy of fruit"; and the effect of the political atmosphere which he had breathed both at home and at the University is traceable all through his career, traceable the more plainly because his native tendency was so decisively to literature. There is sound self-knowledge in the beautiful verses composed after his defeat at Edinburgh, in which he depicts himself as deserted by the Queens of Power and Wealth and Fashion, but still comforted by the "glorious Lady with the eyes of light," who had cheered the exile of Hyde, the captivity of Raleigh and the disgrace of Bacon. Yet this typical man of letters was, through the greater part of his life, a busy politician, though he felt all the time that the days and the nights spent in the House of Commons were lost to literature.

Soon after he left Cambridge Macaulay was called to the bar;

[1] Birrell's *Obiter Dicta*.

but he had begun even earlier his true career as a man of letters. Twice the prize for an English poem was adjudged to him. While he was still at the University he wrote for *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, and shortly after he went down there appeared, in 1825, his first contribution to *The Edinburgh Review*, the essay on Milton, which won him a fame almost as sudden and as dazzling as that which Byron won by *Childe Harold*. It was the beginning of a connexion which lasted for nearly twenty years, and which has enriched English literature with a number of compositions among the most lively and readable, and on the whole among the most valuable, of their kind. It also opened to Macaulay the door of politics. In 1830 he entered the House of Commons as member for Calne, and as that thing which, so brief a time before, he had been certain he would never be, a Whig. His power as a speaker soon raised him into prominence. But he was poor, and in consequence was glad to accept a seat on the Supreme Council of India. He left England in 1834 and returned in 1838. He had attained his end, and, though far from rich, had saved enough to be henceforward independent.

Macaulay's years in India were years of strenuous work, one product of which ranks among the greatest of his claims to the respect and gratitude of his countrymen. It was he who drafted the Indian Penal Code, which, revised by his successors, came into operation in 1862. His biographer, who in this matter spoke "that he did know," says of it that the younger Indian civilians "carry it about in their saddle-bags, and the older in their heads"; and one of Macaulay's successors on the Supreme Council, Fitzjames Stephen, bears emphatic testimony to the thoroughness of the work and the extraordinary grasp it shows of criminal law. On the other hand, we are just beginning to understand the evil of Macaulay's influence on Indian education; for, like most of his contemporaries, he had an overweening confidence in the wisdom of the West, and did not adequately appreciate the enormous difficulty of replacing an ancient civilisation by another, better in many respects certainly, yet possibly not in all.

After his return to England Macaulay again appeared in the

House of Commons, and attained cabinet rank as Secretary at War. At the same time he resumed the place he had gained as one of the most prominent figures in the intellectual society of London. He was a frequent guest at the breakfasts of Samuel Rogers and the dinners of Holland House, and was famous everywhere for the brilliancy and copiousness of his talk. The impression produced depended in a considerable measure upon the character and the mood of the listener; but there is a noticeable difference in the references made by diarists and memoir writers which indicates that, as years went on, a change came over Macaulay himself. In his early years, Charles Greville nearly dropped from his chair in astonishment when he accidentally discovered that the "lump of ordinary clay" beside him was Macaulay; and when Carlyle was told who it was who had monopolised the conversation, he held up his hands with the exclamation, "Eh! the Honourable Tom! was *that* the Honourable Tom?" The plainness and clumsiness remained to the last, but they were half hidden by the tact of the man of the world, and observers saw, or persuaded themselves that they saw, the evidences of distinction before they knew the man.

Macaulay's political life lasted for about ten years after his return from India. His defeat at Edinburgh in 1847 led to his resigning office, and although he again sat in the House of Commons from 1852 to 1856, he no longer took an active part in politics, but devoted himself more and more to literature. In 1857 he became Baron Macaulay of Rothley, and two years later he died.

Macaulay was first and chiefly a student of history and literature. His writings, his letters, his diaries, everywhere bear witness to his extraordinary passion for reading. He marvels at his own persistency in devouring bad novels. He read over and over again books which he already knew perfectly. He said, and it was no idle boast, that if *Paradise Lost* were destroyed, he could restore it from memory; yet he continued to read Milton. From his Indian notes we learn that he had read Plautus four times within a little more than two years. There is a record of a fifth and sixth reading in the latter years of his life; and how

many more there may have been before and between, who can tell? He seems to have been mastered by his passion for the printed page; and we can hardly doubt that it would have been better for him had he spent in quiet thought some of those hours which he devoted to this reiterated reading of familiar books. What he lacks is not breadth of information but depth of reflection.

Lord Houghton in a happy antithesis calls Macaulay "a great historical orator and oratorical historian," and one of the ablest of his critics, R. C. Jebb, endorses this view in the contention that the writings of Macaulay are all oratorical in principle. It is, in truth, the fundamental fact about him. The historical element in his speeches is manifest. Though they were remarkably successful as speeches, and though "the house hushed itself to hear him even when Stanley was the cry," yet they do not impress the reader as the utterances of a born orator, like the speeches of John Bright, or the fragments which have survived from those of Chatham. Neither was their effect the kind of effect which was produced by Sheridan. They are unmistakably the product of the mind from which proceeded the essays, and their most noteworthy feature is the skill and the inexhaustible fertility shown in the use of historical illustrations. Their best passages might be closely paralleled from the more brilliant of the essays, out of which, with trifling changes, most effective speeches might be constructed. Even in *The History of England* the oratorical foundation is manifest; and the popularity of the *Lays of Ancient Rome* for public recitation shows that the same quality underlies the verse of Macaulay as well.

But while Houghton was right in insisting upon the intimate relation, in the case of Macaulay, between the talent for history and the gift of oratory, it would be a great mistake to put the two upon the same level. Macaulay well knew where his own strength lay, though perhaps he was not quite so well aware what were his limitations. "I am nothing," he says, "if not historical"; and the truth of this judgment is impressed upon the reader in everything he ever wrote or said. It is possible to imagine the history, and the essays, and the lays, cast in a less rhetorical

mould; but take away the historical element from them or from the speeches, and there is scarcely anything left. Nowhere is the predominance of the historical spirit more marked than in the essays reprinted from *The Edinburgh Review*. They were published under the title of *Critical and Historical Essays*, but the critical element in them is slight. The reproach sometimes directed against Macaulay on this ground is needless; for there is no disguise about his method, and a man is not to be blamed for not doing that which he never attempted to do, and which his readers assuredly never demanded of him. Montagu's edition of the works of Bacon became the occasion for a brilliant disquisition on the life and philosophy of the great Lord Chancellor. The poet Campbell edited two volumes on *Frederick the Great and his Times*. In the first paragraph of Macaulay's essay on Frederick a compliment is paid to the author of *Lochiel* and *Hohenlinden*, and the last contains a suggestion of a possible second essay on the subject when the Memoirs are completed. All between is Macaulay upon Frederick the Great. Such essays are not, in any real sense, reviews; and they are to be judged, not as criticisms of books, but by the value of the materials they contain, and by the brilliancy, vigour and skill with which those materials are handled.

Macaulay had no ambition to vindicate for himself a place in the ranks of critics. Wordsworth and Coleridge had proved that great poets, and Carlyle that a great historian, could contribute vitalising principles to literary criticism. Macaulay neither did nor attempted to do anything of the sort. Not that he was by any means destitute of critical power. The essay on Montgomery showed that he could manage the destructive method prevalent in the early part of the century as well as the best of its professors; there are passages in the essays on Madame d'Arblay and Addison which display a genuine critical gift; and while no competent judge accepts Macaulay's estimate of the Baconian philosophy, his treatment of the essays in their literary aspect has never been surpassed. Passages like these, however, are exceptions to the rule. Unlike Matthew Arnold, who remains a critic even in his poetry, Macaulay loves to evade the task

of literary analysis, and to treat the subject from the historian's point of view instead.

But though it is not necessary to say much about Macaulay as a critic, some points in the *Essays* may be noted for the insight they afford into the man. And first, perhaps, the essential conservatism of judgment which he displays. He threw off political Toryism, but not literary Toryism. He never displays enthusiasm for any writer whose methods are irreconcilable with those sanctioned by time. Voracious reader as he was, the number of references to contemporary authors, either in his writings or in his journals, is singularly small. He was later than others in coming under the new influences which moulded his generation. He had still to learn German on his return voyage from India, and he did so with "a sort of presentiment, a kind of admonition of the Deity, which assures me that the final cause of my existence,—the end for which I was sent into this vale of tears,—was to make game of certain Germans[1]." Possibly the time spent in the readings of Plautus might have been better bestowed on a reading of Goethe. Here is one of the numerous points of contrast between Macaulay and Carlyle. The latter was emphatically of the romantic school. He was Teutonic rather than classic in his tastes and sympathies, and he found spiritual nurture in Scandinavian rather than in Greek mythology. He was therefore a force tending towards change, possibly revolution, in literature as in other things. Macaulay, on the contrary, was classic, not romantic, Latin, not Teutonic. Rudeness repelled him, and the earnestness which sometimes accompanies rudeness brought him no adequate compensation, as it did to Carlyle. In English literature it was the men with a classical bent who attracted him,—Milton more than Shakespeare, Addison far more than the incomparably greater Carlyle. It is this which makes Macaulay less alien than Carlyle from the French mind. "To reach the English intellect," says Taine, "a Frenchman must make two voyages. When he has crossed the first interval, which is wide, he comes upon Macaulay. Let him re-embark; he must accomplish a second passage, just as long, to arrive at Carlyle for

[1] Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*, i. 460.

instance,—a mind fundamentally Germanic, on the genuine English soil[1]."

Another characteristic which strikes the reader of the *Essays* is the almost complete absence of the speculative spirit. Macaulay thought that history ought to contain a philosophic element, and it is a tribute to his power that by his criticism he convinced John Stuart Mill of the inadequacy of James Mill's political theories. But, notwithstanding this isolated success, Macaulay himself was essentially unphilosophical. It has been said that no one has ever understood metaphysics who never doubted the reality of matter. What Macaulay doubted was rather the reality of ideas; and here we touch another of the contrasts between him and Carlyle. To the latter, the whole earth is but the embodiment of an idea, and in all the works and contrivances of man what is important is the thought in accordance with which they have been shaped. Macaulay, on the other hand, lays stress rather upon the contrivance itself than upon the thought behind it. His favourite illustrations to prove the advance of mankind and the superiority of the nineteenth century to earlier times are mechanical. His whole treatment of the Baconian "philosophy of fruit" is tainted with a shallow materialism. The contrast he draws between Bacon and a man still greater, Aristotle, would have been impossible to anyone with a comprehension either of the method or of the aim of philosophy. It is questionable whether any man who ever lived has produced so much "fruit" as Aristotle; and the fact that Macaulay could choose him to illustrate the unfruitfulness of the speculative life betrays a weakness which was bound to mar much of his work, even when he was not consciously and explicitly discussing philosophical problems. And the danger of contemporary criticism is well illustrated by the fact that the essay in which this gigantic blunder is committed was received at the time almost as an inspired production. "What mortal," writes Jeffrey to Macvey Napier, "could ever dream of cutting out the least particle of this precious work, to make it fit better into your *Review*? It would be worse than paring down the Pitt Diamond to fit the old setting

[1] *English Literature*, translated by Van Laun, iv. 284.

of a Dowager's ring. Since Bacon himself I do not know that there has been anything so fine[1]."

Macaulay was a severe judge of his own *Essays*. Some of them were, he thought, immature; and many had been written in haste and without that care which a conscientious writer gives when he feels that he is writing for future times as well as for the present. He collected and published them under a kind of compulsion. Students of the present day are conscious in addition of defects of which Macaulay himself was not aware. Some of the most brilliant of the *Essays* are, in the judgment of those who are best informed on the subjects about which they treat, radically unsound. This is especially true of the Indian essays, and above all of the essay on Warren Hastings. The stories of Nuncomar and of Impey have been rewritten, and the judgments of Macaulay on many of the most important points reversed. Deficiency of another kind is visible in the essay on Boswell's *Johnson*. The theory that the greatest biography in the English language owes its success to the weaknesses of the biographer has been frequently refuted. It is so irrational that the marvel is that such a theory was ever advanced. A similar superficiality has been pointed out in Macaulay's treatment of Johnson himself and in his setting of the life of Frederick the Great, in contrast with the treatment and setting which we find in Carlyle. Evidently Macaulay had not in the highest degree the power to comprehend character. In the description of externals he was admirable, and to a certain degree he could penetrate motives, but he had not that intuitive insight which gives life to the historical figures of Shakespeare and Scott and Carlyle.

In spite of Macaulay's own judgment, and in spite of all that the most hostile critic can add, it is matter for rejoicing that the pressure of which the author complained was applied, and that he was forced to collect his contributions to *The Edinburgh Review*. No such collection has ever been so brilliantly successful, and very few have so well deserved success. Probably few men of culture would choose the *Essays* as the traditional one book for the traditional desert island; but very many would find

[1] Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*, i. 454.

a place for them in a box of limited dimensions, and nearly all would acknowledge that they have been among the most widely useful of the works of the nineteenth century. "You have done a great deal," said the wise Johnson, "when you have brought him [a boy] to have entertainment from a book." And this Macaulay has done for a vast number of boys and for multitudes of men as well. That collection of essays has served for many thousands of minds as an introduction to history. There is truth in the saying that Macaulay was the man who first succeeded in teaching the English people a part of their own history. It is a service so great that, in gratitude for it, sins worse than the worst he has committed might well be forgotten, and all the honours he won might be deemed well earned. But this is not all. Macaulay's range of reading was extraordinary, his memory marvellous, and, as he wrote, illustrations from every age and country welled up almost to superabundance. There are few books that touch more diverse subjects than the *Essays;* there are few minds too sluggish and inert to be stimulated to interest by some of the multifarious suggestions. Even Macaulay's faults and errors are partly redeemed by the fact that they are so vivifying. What he says about Boswell at any rate inclines the reader to turn to Boswell himself. His treatment of Bacon has impelled many a man to acquire a first-hand knowledge of the philosophy which the essayist misinterprets.

The merits and defects of the *Essays* are repeated in *The History of England*, the former heightened and the latter subdued by the greater labour bestowed. The style is essentially the same, but is more chastened. There are the same tricks and mannerisms, the same brilliant colouring, the same tendency to exaggeration, the same fondness for antithesis. At first the reader is probably swept away by admiration of its rapid facility, its rush and brilliancy, its fertility of illustration, its strength and effectiveness. Afterwards he may gradually become conscious of those defects which are suggested by the adjective "metallic," which Arnold applies in censure to Macaulay's prose and Mrs Browning by way of praise to his verse. The softer tones are wanting, everything is painted either in glare or in gloom. It is the style

of an advocate, not of a judge. All that tells on the side Macaulay is championing is heightened, whatever is adverse is omitted or slurred over. Thus he has to depict the pass of Glencoe. The description is made much more effective, the situation of the clan that lived there becomes more impressive, by raising the mountains to a height they never attain in Scotland, and by depicting a gloom and desolation in the valley such as may indeed be found elsewhere, but not there. The quiet purity of Goldsmith, the severe perfection of Landor, the long harmonies of Ruskin, are outside the range of Macaulay.

But the faults of Macaulay's style, upon which, since Arnold wrote, it has been too much the fashion to dwell, are, after all, but a slight offset to merits far greater and more important. Jeffrey's admiring wonder, on the first discovery of the new writer, where he could have "picked up that style," may have indicated a want of critical balance, but he was more nearly right than the carping critic. It is idle to deny to Macaulay the name of a great writer of English. Whether in his familiar letters, or in the carefully elaborated sentences of *The History*, we see everywhere the master of language. His account, in a letter to Ellis, of the celebrated division in 1831 when the Reform Bill was carried in the House of Commons by a majority of one, is unsurpassed for fire and vividness. The narrative is perfect, not a word superfluous, not a telling detail omitted; and there runs through it all a joyous confidence in the reformed machine of Parliament which may have been unphilosophical, but which is very refreshing. This admirable letter has the roughness which was natural and not unpleasing under the circumstances; but in his more formal compositions Macaulay is careful and polished, and sometimes he rises to a solemn eloquence which can only be paralleled from the writings of the greatest masters of the English language. The description of the burial-place of Monmouth, St Peter's Chapel in the Tower, is one of the gems of English prose:—

"In truth there is no sadder spot on the earth than that little cemetery. Death is there associated, not, as in Westminster Abbey and St Paul's, with genius and virtue, with public veneration and with imperishable renown; not, as in our humblest

churches and churchyards, with everything that is most endearing in social and domestic charities; but with whatever is darkest in human nature and in human destiny, with the savage triumph of implacable enemies, with the inconstancy, the ingratitude, the cowardice of friends, with all the miseries of fallen greatness and of blighted fame. Thither have been carried, through successive ages, by the rude hands of gaolers, without one mourner following, the bleeding relics of men who had been the captains of armies, the leaders of parties, the oracles of senates, and the ornaments of courts. Thither was borne, before the window where Jane Grey was praying, the mangled corpse of Guilford Dudley. Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, and Protector of the realm, reposes there by the brother whom he murdered. There has mouldered away the headless trunk of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester and Cardinal of Saint Vitalis, a man worthy to have lived in a better age and to have died in a better cause. There are laid John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, Lord High Admiral, and Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, Lord High Treasurer. There, too, is another Essex, on whom nature and fortune had lavished all their bounties in vain, and whom valour, grace, genius, royal favour, popular applause, conducted to an early and ignominious doom. Not far off sleep two chiefs of the great house of Howard, Thomas, fourth Duke of Norfolk, and Philip, eleventh Earl of Arundel. Here and there, among the thick graves of unquiet and aspiring statesmen, lie more delicate sufferers; Margaret of Salisbury, the last of the proud name of Plantagenet, and those two fair Queens who perished by the jealous rage of Henry. Such was the dust with which the dust of Monmouth mingled[1]."

This passage is not only an excellent specimen of Macaulay's style, but a typical example of his historical method. The essence of that method lies in the use which is made of detail. Wherever in *The History* a new personage is introduced or a new place named, the subject is immediately vivified with biographical facts, with a description of the place, or with references, as in the passage just quoted, to its past history. No one ever realised more clearly than Macaulay that names and facts are in themselves

[1] *History of England*, i. 623–624.

dead and dry; no one ever succeeded more marvellously in giving them sap and life. Nothing was too trivial and unimportant for his wonderful memory to retain and to supply. If he has to describe a gorgeous ceremonial, the dresses of the actors rise before his eyes and he describes them. In the ballad of *Horatius* he is reminded that the Etruscans wrote from right to left, and he mentions that. Perhaps at times such details might have been omitted without loss; but Jebb has pointed out that the characteristic is of the very essence of Macaulay's plan. It was the condition under which alone *The History* could be made as interesting as a novel. With equal justice the same critic has added that it is also the secret of the unmanageable length of that work. The style is not diffuse, and yet it takes five large volumes to tell the story of some sixteen years.

There were always, even during his lifetime, some who dissented from the popular view of Macaulay. A few, like Brougham and Croker, had personal grudges, and they wreaked them in private or in public. Some were alienated by his real deficiencies. Sir George Cornewall Lewis (who, however, lived to change his opinion) pronounced the treatment of ancient philosophy in the essay on Bacon "shallow and ignorant in the extreme," and prophesied that Macaulay would "never be more than a rhetorician[1]." Others, again, were roused to suspicion by the mere popularity of *The History*. There must be something wrong with a book, not a novel, which was so widely read; there was impropriety in the very aim of making a history as popular as a novel. But all these classes united were a mere handful in comparison with the multitude who, during the life of Macaulay, regarded him as the first of English prose writers. After his death the inevitable reaction set in, and it became the fashion to condemn his style, to question his accuracy and fairness, to denounce his Philistinism, to pour contempt upon his philosophy, or the want of it. Of late years there have been numerous indications that the prevailing opinion, which is likely to be also the opinion of posterity, is intermediate between the two extremes, but a good deal nearer the favourable than the unfavourable one. If

[1] *Letters of Sir G. C. Lewis*, 93.

Macaulay is inferior to the greatest historians, he is inferior to them alone. He has not the breadth and range of Gibbon: he would have lost his way in the wilderness of *The Decline and Fall*: his method was incapable of producing such a stately and monumental record of momentous events. He has not the vivid poetic gift of Carlyle, or his wonderful power of penetrating character. He is no rival to Thucydides in the art of tracing the sequence of cause and effect in human history, or to Tacitus in the keen and terse wisdom of his utterances. But he is a consummate master of narrative, and in this respect is probably surpassed only by Herodotus. His skilful transitions are a study in art, and afford a striking contrast to the clumsy devices of the commonplace writer. He has embodied in his pages an astonishing number of facts, and has shown a wonderful skill in making them no longer 'hard.' The reader is occasionally tempted to think that they are flung together at haphazard, and it is difficult even to imagine a mind so richly stored with detail as to afford material for selection. But no mere medley ever produced such an effect. It is certain that behind the enormous mass of knowledge embodied in *The History of England* there lay, in the mind of the writer, a mass incomparably greater still.

Such a method as Macaulay's exposes the writer to attack at every turn, and his accuracy has frequently been impugned; yet, on the whole, few have better stood the test of investigation. They who have glibly condemned him have not been the men who, by reason of labour bestowed and knowledge amassed, might claim to sit in judgment as his peers. No one insisted more than Freeman on the paramount obligation of the historian to accuracy; but he had the most hearty respect for Macaulay's facts. Of course he fell into error; no man ever wrote history without doing so; but when we consider that almost every sentence states a fact, not an opinion, the rarity of his mistakes becomes astonishing.

The real weaknesses of Macaulay are to be found elsewhere. He was by no means free from bias; but perhaps the historian who is free from it has yet to be discovered, and his works may not, after all, be very lively or even enlightening reading. Thucydides

himself had a prejudice against Cleon and a predilection for Nicias. The influence of eighteenth century deism is obvious in Gibbon. It needs a robust faith in modern 'science' to accept Mommsen's pictures of Caesar and of Cicero as altogether free from prejudice. But, however good may be the company in which he finds himself, the fact that Macaulay shows political bias in his *History* is undeniable. Neither, it must be admitted, was there anything very attractive in the objects of his admiration. The English Whigs were a useful class of people, but they were neither intellectually great nor morally inspiring. They were the apotheosis of the commonplace, and the selection of them as heroes proves that there was some foundation for the charge of Philistinism which was brought against the historian. It was men of this stamp whom Macaulay could best comprehend, and to whom he was rather more than fair. He was apt to see through a magnifying-glass what told in their favour, and to look through the wrong end of the telescope at whatever militated against them. He far more frequently gives wrong impressions through a misleading selection of facts than through mistaken statements.

A mind which is powerfully attracted by the normal is rarely sympathetic with that which is exceptional; and while few have written about enthusiasm more wisely than Macaulay, he himself could never understand enthusiasts. The Quakers, not without cause, objected to his treatment of William Penn, the High Anglicans thought him less than just to Laud and unfair to the Church in the era of the Revolution. He was outwardly more respectful of the Puritans; but his sympathy with them was rather political than religious, and it is doubtful how far he entered into the spirit of those Independents who found in the Old Testament their stern theory of the universe; or whether he comprehended the religious zeal of the Scottish Covenanters, whose sufferings he depicted, any more than the chivalric enthusiasm of their persecutor Claverhouse. His very choice of a period was, perhaps unconsciously, dictated by this consideration. The English Revolution of 1689 was the triumph of moderation and of steady common sense. The reigns of William and Mary and

of Anne are a period of great achievements but, for the most part, of ordinary men. It is difficult to imagine Macaulay dealing with such a volcanic era as that of the French Revolution; it is evident that he never absorbed Elizabethan literature as he absorbed the literature of the age of Queen Anne. Of course he knew with the intellect that the former was the greater; but it was the latter that appealed to his heart.

In spirit and aim Macaulay was on one side akin to the historians of the eighteenth century, on another to his contemporaries and successors of the nineteenth. His profound respect for facts is a point of similarity between him and the latter class, while the literary nature of his ambition connects him with the former; and this is one reason why many have looked upon him with suspicion. Though no one has more jubilantly celebrated the triumphs of applied science, and though his devotion to details was fostered by the scientific spirit, yet he never unreservedly accepted the creed of science in its application to history.

One or two of the ways in which science has influenced the modern conception of history have already been briefly indicated; but the triumphs achieved in the various branches of physics made it certain that, ere long, attempts would be made to apply their methods more widely and generally. What more natural and what more proper than that the conceptions which have done so much to extend the dominion of man over nature should be applied also to the study of human life, and thus, perhaps, similarly extend his dominion over himself? If recent historical work is superior to earlier histories in patient thoroughness, in the manner of handling materials, in the sense of the importance of beginnings, this, as has been already indicated, is largely due to the scientific spirit. But before we accept the theory that history is just science applied to human life, it is necessary to consider the differences between the problems which physical science has to face, and those which arise in the investigation of political society. The great category of physical science is the category of cause, and its methods are fully adequate to the end contemplated. The problems of science often admit of absolute demonstration, and there is, nearly always, the prospect of sooner

or later approaching demonstration. But it is not so with respect to the relations of men in society. Mill himself insists on the utter inadequacy of induction to deal with such problems as these, and the necessity of resorting to the deductive or *a priori* method. This, no doubt, is still within the sphere of science. But it is likewise a method which, in its ratiocinative part, has been applied with the utmost acuteness to history and to every other subject of human interest ever since men began to reason at all. The really new feature of the 'scientific method' is the greater solidity with which the inductive foundation is built; and if the inductive part takes us, as Mill believed, only a very little way, it is clear that the importance of the application of the methods of science to history has been greatly exaggerated.

Mill's strictures on the application of those methods to sociological problems are severe. "Nothing," he says, "can be more ludicrous than the sort of parodies on experimental reasoning which one is accustomed to meet with, not in popular discussion only, but in grave treatises, when the affairs of nations are the theme. 'How,' it is asked, 'can an institution be bad when the country has prospered under it?' 'How can such and such causes have contributed to the prosperity of one country, when another has prospered without them?' Whoever makes use of an argument of this kind, not intending to deceive, should be sent back to learn the elements of some one of the more easy physical sciences[1]." Concrete instances of the sort of argument Mill ridicules abound. Thirty or forty years ago grave statesmen and economists confidently inferred the advantages of free trade from the rapid increase of British commerce. They took no account of such vast concurrent changes as the development of railways and the multiplication of steamships. Travellers to America used invariably to be asked whether they did not see, in the prosperity of a country which the government of the Turk could hardly ruin, the advantages of 'free institutions.' It is not at all necessary to dispute the advantages of free institutions, or the benefits accruing from free trade; but the expansion of British commerce does not demonstrate the one, nor does the

[1] Mill's *Logic*, Book III. ch. x.

prosperity of the United States establish the other. To point to such facts and then arbitrarily to refer them to one out of a number of possible causes, is a mere travesty of proof. But while it is easy to detect the flimsiness of the argument, it is far less easy to suggest how any method that may reasonably be called scientific is to be made available for the solution of such problems. The life of a nation cannot be suspended while investigation is made, the operation of other causes cannot be controlled, the inventor will not stay his hand, he who enjoys the blessing of free institutions will not submit to despotism in order to discover whether, perchance, he might not thrive under that also.

The question may reasonably be asked whether mistakes of this kind have been made solely by statesmen and economists; and a very cursory examination of the so-called scientific historians shows that they were no less liable to error. The measureless sway of the Teutonic idea over the mind of Freeman, which occasioned the gibe already quoted from Arnold, is as unphilosophical as the ordinary American's conviction that all good things flow from free institutions. The extraordinary statement of Stubbs that the literature of mediæval Italy drew its inspiration from north of the Alps betrays a similar want of balance and obsession by one thought. So do his theories of Church history. Evidently therefore the scientific method leaves possible mistakes as great, not merely as any committed by the poet-historian Carlyle, or the popular Macaulay, but even as those committed by the historians of the eighteenth century. The new method is not really new, and it is no more miracle-working than was the *Novum Organum* of Bacon.

The department of ancient history, in which the standard of English scholarship was deplorably low, was the first to feel deeply the influence of the so-called scientific method. For many years after the opening of the nineteenth century the accepted history of Greece was still that of Mitford, a work whose political bias was exposed by Grote in *The Westminster Review*. In Roman history the antiquated Nathaniel Hooke reigned; and, in spite of the work of the French scholar Beaufort in the first half of the

eighteenth century, many of the legends of early Roman history were still uncritically accepted as records of literal facts. Upon minds in this state the work of German scholars came as a revelation. Thomas Arnold was startled and aroused by what he found in Niebuhr's *History of Rome*. "It opened wide before my eyes," he said, "the extent of my own ignorance[1]." It confirmed the doubts he already entertained as to early Roman history, and suggested further doubts where he had previously rested in contented certainty. An article by Arnold in *The Quarterly Review* of 1825 was, according to Niebuhr himself, the means of first introducing his history to the English[2].

The soil was ready for the seed. Julius Hare and Thirlwall, assisted by other Cambridge scholars, undertook the translation of Niebuhr's *History*; and for a time the German writer enjoyed an authority which no one ventured to challenge. Not until after the turn of the century was any serious attempt made to traverse his theories, and the feeling for him in many cases was that of a disciple for a master too deeply admired and revered for criticism. Niebuhr's theory, said Freeman in a review of Mommsen, "acted like a spell: it was not to argument or evidence that it appealed: his followers avowedly claimed for him a kind of power of 'divination[3].'" A few years earlier Freeman himself had conceded this power to Niebuhr, and used that very word to describe it. The instrument by which the German historian's authority was shattered in England was Sir George Cornewall Lewis (1806—1863), who, in his *Inquiry on the Credibility of early Roman History* (1855), insisted upon that evidence which trusting disciples had been contented to forgo, and who pointed out that the 'divination' of the man who accepted as genuine the forgery of the Abbé Soulaire stood in need of confirmation. It is curious that Lewis himself was in turn the victim of a forgery: he edited Minoides Menas's spurious fables of Babrius.

Along with this foreign influence there went one of native growth, which was a little later in manifesting itself. George Grote (1794–1871), who was slightly older than either Arnold

[1] Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, i. 44. [2] *ibid.* i. 45.
[3] Quoted in Stephen's *Life of Freeman*, i. 203.

or Thirlwall, applied the ideas of the Utilitarian philosophy to the study of ancient history, with results in some respects not unlike those arrived at under German influence. The recognition that statements hitherto taken upon trust needed critical examination, the prominence of the category of cause and the thoroughness in the sifting of materials, are features in common. Excessive addiction to theory is peculiar to Niebuhr; while in Grote's case a certain aridity of tone, as if facts were all the better for being dry, and an evident distrust of the faculty of imagination, are features suggestive of Utilitarian influence.

By these men and under these influences ancient history was rewritten in English. We may judge the magnitude of the service they performed by the completeness with which the work of their predecessors has been forgotten. The march of knowledge has, indeed, left Arnold and Grote too behind, but the advance has been made largely by their help, not, as in the case of the writers whom they superseded, in spite of the false views supported by their authority.

Thomas Arnold (1795–1842) was in some respects the most interesting of the three historians of the ancient world. His short life was one of manifold activity; and as a clergyman and a schoolmaster, even more than as a writer, he left his mark upon his time. It was certainly in the capacity of teacher that he was greatest and wielded the profoundest and most enduring influence. From an early age he seems to have felt that the school was his true sphere. Ordained at Oxford in 1818, he settled in 1819 at Laleham on the Thames, where the remains of his great poet-son now rest. But the business of his nine years of life there was the tuition of youths who came to him to be prepared for the University. When, in 1827, he was elected to the head-mastership of Rugby, he was simply exchanging one educational office for another. Arnold's election was largely brought about by a letter of Hawkins, Provost of Oriel College, to the trustees, "in which it was predicted that, if Mr Arnold were elected to the head-mastership of Rugby, he would change the face of education all through the public schools of England[1]." Seldom has so bold

[1] *Life of Arnold*, i. 55.

a prophecy been so completely justified. When Arnold went to Rugby, it ranked only among the second-class public schools of England, and not particularly high among these. When he died in 1842, in educational reputation it stood first of all. Moreover, his work had even then reacted powerfully upon the other public schools; and to this day his influence is felt. What Arnold aimed at, and what he succeeded in accomplishing, was not merely to imbue his pupils with learning, but still more to mould their character. *Tom Brown's School Days* shows how wonderful was his success. So do the records of Oxford University. The youths who, year after year, came up from Rugby, all bore a certain stamp which marked them out from their fellow-undergraduates. The unfriendly whispered that they were 'prigs.' In C. H. Pearson's phrase, "they were taught to be always feeling their moral muscles[1]." Some trace of this defect is noticeable in *Oakfield* (1853), the youthful work of William Delafield Arnold; but still more noticeable is the essential manliness of the book. Though the Rugby boys had their faults and mannerisms, they grew into high-minded young men. Intellectually, they were far above the general level. Their master had imbued them with his own love of history, and their highest attainments when they came to the University were in that domain. They were also keenly interested in theology: no one at Oxford in those days could fail to be so, least of all a pupil of Dr Arnold. For Arnold was stirred to the very soul by dislike and dread of the Tractarian movement. He wrote and he preached against it; but he served the cause of liberalism still more potently by the pupils he trained. Clough and A. P. Stanley and Arnold's own son Matthew were Rugby's great contribution to liberalism in Oxford and to literature in England, while Rugby remained under the government of its great head-master.

Arnold's own literary works represent only a fraction of his power. His life was short, it was busy, and his literary faculty developed late. Certain volumes of sermons, a variety of pamphlets and articles on miscellaneous subjects, a volume of lectures on modern history, an edition of Thucydides and a

[1] *Memorials of Pearson*, 17.

history of Rome, broken off in the middle of the Second Punic War, are the sum of his writings. Under the circumstances it is a remarkable record of work, even although not much of it is of permanent interest. The sermons are vigorous, manly compositions, distinguished by that moral grandeur which was Arnold's greatest gift; and so deeply is this impressed upon the *Lectures on Modern History* (1842) that some of the listeners were moved even to tears. But nevertheless, as a man of letters, Thomas Arnold lives by the *History of Rome* (1838–1843) alone, and time has obscured the fame even of that. Arnold came early in the history of the new movement, and much of his work has since been eclipsed by the profounder research and more brilliant exposition of Mommsen, not to speak of lesser scholars. His excessive and uncritical admiration of Niebuhr betrayed Arnold into many errors, especially in the treatment of the early history of Rome; and with the decline in the reputation of Niebuhr there has necessarily gone a decline in the estimation of Arnold's history. After he emerges from the legendary period his work has more permanent value, but even there so much has been done since his day that it is largely out of date. The constitutional history of Rome has been rewritten. Native sagacity and keen interest in political developments were powerless to anticipate the results of a laborious deciphering of monuments, of wider comparison on grounds of philology and anthropology, and of the closer investigation of the early history of institutions. What Arnold did best was the description of military operations, and it is this part of his work which has most satisfactorily stood the test of time. He was a combative clergyman: he would have made an admirable soldier. His accounts of campaigns are admitted by military men to show the insight of a soldier, and they have a literary charm which is rarely found in the writings of men of action. And yet Arnold had not that instinctive literary talent which has been displayed by more than one member of his family. In early days his English was clumsy and crude. Practice enabled him to write always with force and sometimes with eloquence; but with him the first consideration was invariably the thing to be said, and never the manner of saying it.

Arnold, throughout his life and in every phase of his activity, was a teacher of principles. Follower though he was of Niebuhr, he presents a point of view which is first of all peculiarly English, and in the second place characteristically his own. He would not have thought it worth while to retell the story of Rome if he had looked upon it as merely an interesting tale of old days. But he had the English regard for the practical and the useful, and he hoped that, without sacrificing impartiality, his history might be the means of teaching sound political principles. This hope rested upon his fundamental conception of ancient history as being still essentially modern. It was from Arnold that Freeman learnt that principle of the unity of history, which he sometimes applied with a want of discretion such as his teacher would never have shown; and in his edition of Thucydides Arnold expresses the conviction that the history of Greece and Rome is not an idle inquiry fitted only to excite the curiosity of scholars, but a practical subject from which the statesman and the citizen may derive instruction.

Arnold believed also, not without reason, that an Englishman had exceptional advantages for reading aright the lesson of Roman history. "It is not," he says in the preface, "claiming too much to say, that the growth of the Roman commonwealth, the true character of its parties, the causes and tendency of its revolutions, and the spirit of its people and its laws, ought to be understood by none so well as by those who have grown up under the laws, who have been engaged in the parties, who are themselves citizens of our kingly commonwealth of England." And this preface contains yet another indication of the way in which Arnold carried into his historical work the opinions and prepossessions of his daily life. He proposed to carry his narrative down to the coronation of Charlemagne at Rome. At this point, he says, we see the elements of the old western empire organised again into a new form, and we find that form marked by the "division between the so-called secular and spiritual powers" which has ever since prevailed. In this we hear the voice of him who could "understand no perfect Church, or perfect State, without their blending into one" in the ultimate form of "the Kingdom of God,

for the most effective removal of all evil, and the promotion of all good[1]."

To Arnold then human history was one continuous record, every part of which lived on into the present and carried its lesson for living men in their practical life. Nothing ever came to an end, and chronological divisions had only a conditional validity. And if human life was one throughout history, *a fortiori* it was one and indivisible in any given epoch. All such divisions as that into temporal and spiritual, sacred and secular, were misleading and false, and it was the business of the writer and teacher to lay bare their fallaciousness. At the same time, the historian had his own special sphere, which was not identical with the sphere either of the theologian or of the philosopher. His theme was the life of the State or Commonwealth, which Arnold would by no means identify with the sum of the lives of the citizens. He did not believe, with Carlyle, that history is a collection of biographies. He would hardly have accepted the Platonic view that the State is the individual writ large. It was something greater than the individual, or than any collection of individuals. Arnold bowed down before it in reverence. He insisted upon its moral character: its true interest, he held, could never be advanced by action which was morally indefensible. This conception of the State was cognate to his conception of the Church; and we can see why he who held it objected so strongly to the suggestion of a separation between the two. To contemporaries such ideas were fascinating, but also puzzling. It is clear that, in more modern language, Arnold meant to teach that the State was an organism; but perhaps he was not himself fully master of the idea, and by an age which trusted rather in mechanical metaphors and formulae, the meaning was not easily comprehended.

Contemporaneously with the studies of Arnold in Roman history, Thirlwall and Grote had been devoting themselves to the history of Greece. They had been friends and schoolfellows[2],

[1] *Life of Arnold*, ii. 187.

[2] They were destined finally to a yet closer union. They rest in the same grave in Westminster Abbey.

yet, curiously enough, they carried on their investigations unknown to one another until the results began to appear in print. Thirlwall's *History of Greece* (1835–1847) was originally meant for *Lardner's Cyclopaedia*, and when the scope was afterwards enlarged it was, as the author admits in the Advertisement, impossible wholly to remove the traces of the original plan. They show themselves in a certain want of proportion, and perhaps in a citation of authorities more sparing than Thirlwall's learning could easily have afforded.

It was mainly the defects due to the original design of Thirlwall that gave George Grote (1794–1871) his opportunity. In native power of mind, in scholarship and in literary capacity, he was Thirlwall's inferior; but he was, if not more laboriously, at least more single-mindedly, industrious. He devoted far more time to the history of Greece than Thirlwall did. He had been at work for twenty years before, in 1846, he published the first two volumes, and the last did not appear till 1856. Indeed it may be said that his whole literary life was devoted to this subject; for, according to his conception of history, *Plato and the other Companions of Socrates* (1865) and the incomplete Aristotelian studies issued posthumously in 1872 were simply appendages of the history. The result of this single-minded devotion is apparent when we compare his history point by point with that of Thirlwall. Take, for example, Grote's thorough treatment of the momentous revolution of Cleisthenes, and put alongside of it the comparatively meagre and inadequate account of Thirlwall. Or set side by side the accounts given by the two historians of the battle of Leuctra. Grote detects and makes evident to his readers the vital nature of the change in tactics initiated by Epaminondas. The Theban phalanx is enormously deep (Napoleon's principle of throwing an irresistible mass on the decisive point), and the advance is *en échelon*. Thirlwall is puzzled. He has a partial vision of the truth, but not a clear enough view to enable him to show it to his readers. "It was the object of Epaminondas to bring his mass to bear upon the enemy's right wing, where the Spartans were posted; and he seems to have succeeded in detaching it from the main body so that it had to sustain the whole brunt of the first onset."

The misty phrase, "he seems to have succeeded in detaching it from the main body," represents the attack *en échelon*.

Contrasts of this kind might be indefinitely multiplied; and they show clearly why it was that Thirlwall's history was immediately superseded by Grote's: the more thorough necessarily overcame the less thorough. But it is also true that, in some respects, Thirlwall is decidedly superior to Grote. Though he was not a great master of English, his style is more luminous and nervous than that of his rival. He is also far more judicial. Grote's judgment was warped by his prepossession in favour of the Athenian democracy, and in consequence his treatment of the Macedonian power which overthrew it is less fair and less satisfactory than Thirlwall's.

While Thirlwall was in the current of German influence, Grote's thought was English in its source. He was one of the most orthodox of the Utilitarian school; and indeed the fidelity of his discipleship may be supposed to indicate a certain lack of originality. He carried the principles and temperament of the Utilitarians into his historical work as well as into politics; and, while the solid worth of his *History* is a proof of their value, the absence of historical imagination and the even ostentatious disregard of artistic principles are indications of the defects and limitations of the school.

According to Langlois and Seignobos (quoted by Leslie Stephen) Grote "produced the first model of a history in the class to which it belongs[1]." It may be questioned whether this judgment will be long acquiesced in, even by those who adopt "the conception of history as now accepted by the best writers." The absence of imagination, which Grote esteemed an advantage, was really a source of grave danger. Imagination sometimes leads men into error, but it saves them from errors more numerous and far graver. The nature of the impulse which moved Grote to write might have made critics cautious, if not suspicious. That impulse was anger, righteous enough, at the Toryism of Mitford's *History of Greece*. Now Grote was a member of the extreme left. Rarely has any party in English politics shown more of the

[1] Stephen's *English Utilitarians*, iii. 338.

doctrinaire spirit, rarely has any been more eager to proselytise, than the philosophical Radicals. The unscientific historian Macaulay has been loudly blamed for his whiggery. Is there no reason to suspect the scientific Grote of a similar error? Dealing with the history of a state and of a civilisation which had passed away, Grote had far less temptation to partisanship than Macaulay; and yet we can detect again and again the tones of the Radical reply to the Tory Mitford. All the pains that Alison took to prove that Providence was on the side of the Tories, Grote took to prove that the same power had decreed from all eternity that democracy was the proper form of government. As regards the fundamental principles of his history, he was not judicially minded. He held a brief for Athens. Justice had still to be done to that great city; for the gratitude which mankind owes to her had never been adequately acknowledged. But Grote swings to the other extreme. He will not admit the obvious faults of the Athenian people, faults which their own greatest men not only admitted but insisted upon. Where he cannot excuse, his desire to palliate is obvious. His account of the atrocious Mitylenean decree shows at least as much prejudice as Macaulay's excuses for the share of William III in the Glencoe massacre. With regard to the theoric fund he was more sure of the wisdom of the Athenians than Demosthenes was.

These are matters of comparatively unimportant detail; but they are indications of Grote's attitude of mind towards democracy, and that is fundamental. Grote had a right to his opinion, even as Macaulay had a right to his faith in the Whigs, Thiers to his cult of the Revolution, Mommsen to his belief in Caesarism, Michelet to his semi-religious faith in France. But then, this is not removed from the category of personal predilections by calling the history in which it appears 'scientific.' The element of prejudice is all the more manifest when we consider the vast difference between ancient democracy and modern. Ancient democracy rested upon slavery. In Athens there was a slave population outnumbering the free. The achievements of the Athenian democracy were made possible only by the labours of the enslaved majority, by the sacrifice of the many to the few.

Aristotle was perfectly right in teaching that slavery was indispensable—indispensable, that is, to the only civilisation within his experience which secured political liberty within the bounds of a class tolerably numerous. How else, except by the help of slaves, could the Greek citizen get the leisure necessary to discharge the duties which his system threw upon him? But a democracy resting on slavery is not, in the modern sense, a democracy at all. The problem of enabling the cultured, leisured, comparatively well-to-do Athenian citizen to take part, without doing mischief, in public affairs, was totally different from the problem of enabling the ignorant toiling masses of modern states to do so. And yet Grote nowhere points out that democracy in the ancient world meant something wholly different from what we now call democracy. The natural conclusion from his silence is that the words are used in the same sense, and the whole tone of the *History of Greece* favours that conclusion. The nineteenth century Radical is all along strengthening his own convictions by the lessons he draws from the success of Athens. A more vivid imagination might have saved him from this mistake; and the fact that he could make it is a proof that the "model history" still leaves a good deal to be desired.

Mention has already been made of Sir G. C. Lewis's (1806–1863) *Inquiry on the Credibility of early Roman History*; and so great was the revolution in opinion brought about by this book that, though Lewis's works seem, at least superficially, rather miscellaneous, the author may probably be best classified among writers on ancient history. There is no literary figure of the time who so strangely combines interest with aridity, none probably in whom the balance between the practical and the speculative is so perfect. Macaulay and Lytton were politicians as well as men of letters, Gladstone and Disraeli were men of letters as well as politicians; but in Sir George Lewis's case it is difficult to say which aspect is the more prominent. By temperament, no doubt, he was primarily a scholar; but the man who was successively Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary and Secretary for War, and whose works so largely deal with questions within the sphere of practical politics, was clearly, in a very pregnant sense, a politician

as well. The most wonderful thing about Lewis was the profundity of the scholarship which he contrived to acquire and to retain. Milman declared that he might "have done honour, as professor of Greek, to the most learned University in Europe[1]," and his works are loaded, even to excess, with evidences of his erudition. "No German professor," says Bagehot, "from the smoke and study of many silent years, has ever put forth books more bristling with recondite references, more exact in every technicality of scholarship, more rich in matured reflection, than Sir George Lewis found time, mind, and scholarlike curiosity to write in the very thick of eager English life[2]."

It is the width of his learning rather than versatility of mind which gives to Lewis's works their multifarious character. There were few subjects about which he did not know a good deal, and there were several besides Greek, as the editor of his *Letters* remarks, in respect to which he was well fitted to become a professor. Scarcely anything could occur in the world of learning which did not interest him; scarcely anything, either practical or theoretical, could be suggested about which he did not possess knowledge. His practical side is shown in his *Remarks on the Use and Abuse of some Political Terms* (1832), a work still useful because of its clearness and good sense. Raynouard's book on the *Roman de Rou* drew from him an examination, *On the Origin of the Romance Languages* (1835), just as Niebuhr's theories caused him, twenty years later, to write the *Inquiry*. So too, in his *Survey of the Astronomy of the Ancients* (1862), he is led to examine the then current theories of the Egyptologists. His political interests show themselves in essays on British administrations from 1783 to 1830, in dissertations on foreign jurisdiction and on a number of Irish questions, and, above all, in the work *On the Government of Dependencies* (1841), which is still valuable, notwithstanding all the changes due to time, as an exceedingly keen and, at the same time, dispassionate examination of one of the greatest problems of English statesmanship. The philosophical side of Lewis's mind is best represented in the treatises *On the Influence*

[1] *Letters of Sir G. C. Lewis*, Preface, ix
[2] *ibid.*

of Authority in Matters of Opinion (1849) and *On the Methods of Observation and Reasoning in Politics* (1852).

Widely as they vary in subject, all these works are very obviously the product of the same intellect. They are all externally dry and hard. Their author evidently had a profound reverence for truth, but he seems to have had no other passion whatever, nor any prejudice at all. He was ready to examine anything and everything, his own opinions included, with the same impartiality. Nothing disturbed his serenity in the pursuit of truth, nothing could induce him to swerve aside in the least degree. Several historians of the time—Hallam, Stubbs, Creighton—have been praised each as excelling all others in impartiality; but the praise properly belongs to Lewis alone. To him it meant no effort, it was a matter of temperament. He has, of course, to pay the penalty as well as to reap the benefit; for the coldness of temperament which makes it possible does not conduce to interest.

There is no writer more consistently rationalistic than Lewis. Whatever may be the subject under discussion, the question asked is invariably whether the evidence for a particular conclusion is or is not sufficient. Usually the answer is in the negative. Niebuhr has set vain imaginings in the place of facts, the Egyptologists have blown empty bubbles of theory, the claims of Churches to teach their doctrines authoritatively are found to be untenable. The work of examining pretensions such as these was necessary, and Lewis did it admirably; but the generally negative character of the results is another reason for his unpopularity. The average reader demands warmth and colour, and in Lewis neither is to be found, only a light of truth as clear as sunlight but as cold as moonlight.

No other English historian of the ancient world can be set beside Arnold and Grote and Thirlwall. Probably someone would have attempted to accomplish what Arnold had left half done; but ere long the great work of Mommsen warned all weaker men off the field, and the most ambitious achievement of Charles Merivale (1808–1893), his *History of the Romans under the Empire* (1850–1862), fills the gap, not between Arnold and

Gibbon, but rather between Mommsen and Gibbon. In quality however it cannot be compared with the work of either of these two giants. Since Grote, no Englishman has told on the great scale the story of ancient Greece; but there was one remarkable man, described by Freeman as "the most truly original historian of our time and language[1]," and of whom J. S. Mill was accustomed to say that a page of him was worth a chapter of Gibbon[2]. He devoted his life to the history of the Greek people during the two thousand years between the Roman conquest and his own day, showing that originality which Freeman justly commends both in his choice of a subject and in his conception of, and his equipment for, his task. The fame of George Finlay (1799–1875) has suffered from this choice of a theme in which, important as it unquestionably is, few feel deep interest. Most men are contented to follow the later fortunes of Greece in such an outline of them as Gibbon affords. But Finlay was an enthusiast. He probably caught the spark of zeal from his uncle, Kirkman Finlay, who was killed in 1828 in the Greek war of independence. George Finlay himself took part in that war, and for two months he was in close association with Byron, leaving Missolonghi just nine days before the poet's death. After the conclusion of the war he settled in Greece, where he had purchased an estate; and from that time till his death the greater part of his life was spent among the people whose cause he had espoused and whose history he was studying.

Finlay's work was published in sections or periods between 1844 and 1861, and all the parts were gathered up into the *History of Greece from its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time*, B.C. 146 *to* A.D. 1864, which was published posthumously in 1877. Its merits were such as might be expected from the author's life and character. He was not a great writer, and his history is not a work of art. On the contrary, it has a special flaw, inasmuch as he did not pursue the same plan throughout. Experts say that in mere erudition Finlay is surpassed by several of the Germans; but in the combination of learning with practical

[1] Quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism*.
Lord Morley, in *Life of Gladstone*.

knowledge it is admitted that he stands alone. He knew thoroughly the people about whom he wrote. Often he wrote in the history, as in his private relations with them he spoke and acted, as a friend more candid than flattering. He had the largeness of view which is born of the knowledge of affairs. Having played his own part in practical life, he could value the successes and understand the failures of practical men. In particular, he intimately knew the economic conditions under which the Greek people lived, and many a passage in the history shows his sense of their importance. "I lost my money and my labour," he says of his own experiments in farming, "but I learned how the system of tenths has produced a state of society, and habits of cultivation, against which one man can do nothing." It is this practical experience and this familiarity with the people that give Finlay his unique position among the writers who have dealt with the Byzantine Empire and the later history of the Greek people.

Finlay traces one of the lines of connexion between the ancient world and the modern; Henry Hart Milman made it the business of his later life to trace another. We have already met Milman as a poet; and though his work in verse is far inferior to his history, it is easy to see in the latter the influence of the poetic manner of conception, which is none the less present although in many passages the style is complex and ungainly. The turning-point in Milman's life came with the publication of his *History of the Jews* (1829). Up to that point he had been almost exclusively a poet and dramatist, and he still was, and for two years more continued to be, professor of poetry at Oxford. But the decline of his popularity induced him to seek another outlet for his energies. Had he desired to make a commotion his ambition would have been gratified to the full. His *History of the Jews* has been called "epoch-making" by a writer who yet regarded it as "not of extraordinary merit[1]." And there is reason for the description. For learning and thoroughness it cannot be compared with the great work of Ewald, which appeared not very many years later. But in conception, Milman's *History of the Jews* was, as regards England at least, profoundly original. It treated the Jews

[1] R. Garnett, in *The Dictionary of National Biography*.

as members of the human family, subject to the ordinary laws of historical development, and to be studied by the ordinary methods of historical research. The commotion was so great that Murray found it necessary to stop the series, entitled *The Family Library*, in which the pestilent work appeared. "The *History of the Jews* was pronounced *unsound*; it was alleged that the miracles had been too summarily disposed of; Abraham was referred to as an Arab sheik, and Jewish history was too sacred to be submitted to the laws of ordinary investigation[1]." Worse still, if possible, was the suspicion that the historian's weapons were drawn from the German armoury; for it was the time of the controversy between Pusey and Rose, and all things German were even more than usually obnoxious to English orthodoxy. Milman was roused. He denied that he had followed the Germans; truly, no doubt, as regards details; but certainly the fundamental conception was familiar enough to the Germans, while it was a startling novelty in England. On another point he had, it seems, an answer which would have been entertaining had he produced it. One man, says the proverb, may steal a horse, while another dares not look over the wall. Among the assailants who impugned Milman's treatment of miracles was Bishop Mant. "If I am driven to it, I will show them," he says, "not whence I have derived my notion of the miracles, but where precisely the same explanations are to be found—in Bishop Mant and Dr D'Oyly's *Bible*—and if I am forced I will print in parallel columns[2]." But he grew tired of the uproar and almost wished the Jews "were with the Egyptians at the bottom of the Red Sea[3]."

This outcry was in some degree a measure of Milman's independence and originality. It stopped his promotion for a time, but he was a man of rare courage and intellectual integrity, and neither obloquy nor the obscuration of worldly prospects ever induced him to recant. The fundamental conception is so familiar now and so completely beyond dispute that it takes some reflection to do full justice to Milman and to recognise that a book which seems in the present day to be of no extraordinary merit

[1] Smiles's *Memoirs of John Murray*, ii. 298. [2] *ibid.* ii. 300.
[3] *ibid.* ii. 301.

may nevertheless be "epoch-making," and may give its author a title to the lasting gratitude of his countrymen. Not only the soldiers who storm the fort, but they whose bodies fill the ditch for the conquerors to march over, are worthy of honour.

From this time onward it is as a historian that Milman figures in the annals of literature. His edition of *The Decline and Fall* (1838–1839) and his *Life of Gibbon* (1839) indicated the direction his studies were taking; and their character was fully revealed in his *History of Christianity from the Birth of Christ to the Abolition of Paganism in the Roman Empire* (1840). It is characterised by the same breadth of view which had given so deep offence in *The History of the Jews*; but, though intrinsically superior to the earlier work, it neither occasioned such excitement nor is so memorable for its effects. There was enough in the book to alarm all sects and parties except a few Broad Churchmen; but, while the Tractarians were perhaps even more shocked than they had been by *The History of the Jews*, the Protestant majority in England regarded with comparative indifference the exposure of the very human instruments and devices by which the infallible Church had grown to power and greatness. What made them anxious was the suspicion that, in other hands if not in Milman's, the same principles of criticism might be applied to some phases of the history of the Protestant Reformation. The majority at both extremes therefore condemned Milman as an extremist; yet, in truth, his error was not an excess of the rationalistic spirit, but rather an excessive conservatism which can scarcely be justified to reason, and which stopped him short before the consequences of his own thought were fully unfolded to himself. He reserved from investigation "the things necessary to salvation": he omitted to explain how it is to be determined what these things are.

The History of Christianity mentioned above proved to be only an introduction to *The History of Latin Christianity, including that of the Popes to Nicholas V* (1854–1855), which is Milman's greatest, as well as his most ambitious, work. Here the significance of the author's studies in Gibbon and of the authorities whom Gibbon used becomes apparent. No two works of equal magnitude in the English language run more closely parallel as do *The History of*

Latin Christianity and *The Decline and Fall.* They deal with much the same period, and necessarily the characters who figure in the one reappear in the other. And yet they are widely different. Gibbon aptly characterised his work as the history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire; had Milman desired to show that, while he tells the story of the same period, his object is by no means to rewrite Gibbon, he might have done so by using the words "rise and progress." Gibbon is concerned with the secular state of Rome which decayed and disappeared, Milman with that great spiritual empire which sprang up and flourished on its ruins. The comparison, which is almost inevitable, is somewhat hard upon Milman; but an inferiority which he shares with all other English historians is no discredit, and the very possibility of making the comparison indicates the rare strength and massiveness of his work. One of the most thoughtful of those critics whose studies have turned them towards theological and ecclesiastical writings, pronounced him, in respect of the combination of genius with learning, easily first of modern English churchmen[1].

All these men, with the exception of Merivale, who is slightly junior, were the contemporaries or seniors of Macaulay and Carlyle. The immense superiority of their work to that of the predecessors whom they superseded gives colour to the idea that they wrote history upon a new method and had adopted some principle which clearly marked them off from the historians of the eighteenth century. But in truth this idea is rather the growth of a later day; and when the question is investigated it becomes manifest that the sole important difference is that the later writers were more thorough and more painstaking than the earlier ones—a difference of great practical importance, but not one which gives rise to a new species of history. When however we turn to men twenty or thirty years younger, we find a conflict between two great schools, the literary and the so-called scientific. Of the former school the most conspicuous representative was James Anthony Froude (1818–1894), while the other is seen at its best in William Stubbs (1825–1901), Edward

[1] Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought.*

Augustus Freeman (1823–1892), Samuel Rawson Gardiner (1829–1902), and Mandell Creighton (1843–1901). John Richard Green (1837–1883) stood in some respects intermediate, but his personal connexions ally him with the scientific group.

Froude, the son of a clergyman, was educated with great care and, naturally, on the lines of orthodox belief. But his father's religion, though so far tainted with bigotry that he "would not have a copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in his house[1]," was nevertheless practical rather than dogmatic; and so, when, in 1836, young Froude went into residence at Oriel College, Oxford, he found himself in a whirl of theological speculation which was wholly new to him. As his elder brother was one of the most conspicuous of the Tractarians, young Froude was brought into close connexion with that party, and for a time he was profoundly influenced by them. The influence never passed away (no influence ever does pass away), but its effects changed. He was enlisted by Newman in the work of writing the *Lives of the Saints*, and contributed a biography of St Neot. But the childish fables disgusted him, and, becoming distrustful of the reasoning of Newman, he soon ceased to be, if he ever was, a Newmanite. He had read Carlyle's *French Revolution*, but failed to understand it, until John Sterling, whom he met in the winter of 1841–1842, gave him the key to the mystery. From Carlyle he went to the Germans, and so passed for ever from under the sway of Newman's ideas. There was however an interval before the teaching of Carlyle and the Germans sank into Froude's mind In 1845 he was still sufficiently orthodox to be ordained deacon; but doubts grew so rapidly that he never proceeded to priest's orders, and, when a change in the law allowed him, he cast off the fragment of clericalism which till then he had worn of necessity.

Froude's literary career opened with a volume of autobiographic fiction, *Shadows of the Clouds* (1847); but *The Nemesis of Faith* (1849) was his first book that is likely to be remembered. It too has, to a large extent, the interest of a spiritual autobiography; for there can be little doubt that the mind whose development is there traced was essentially Froude's own. Forty years passed

[1] Paul's *Life of Froude*, 3.

before he again made an excursion into the field of fictitious literature. *The Two Chiefs of Dunboy* (1889), a romance of Irish history, deserves more praise than it has received, and goes far to prove that, had the author chosen, he might have won a very high place as a novelist. About nearly all things Irish opinion is hopelessly divided; but many who know Ireland well declare that Froude, besides writing a most interesting story, has shown great insight into the country and its inhabitants.

The Nemesis of Faith was a blow not only to the Tractarians but to orthodoxy in general. The inspiration of the Bible has since been so often disputed that one attack more causes little excitement; but matters were different in a generation when it was dangerous even to call Abraham a sheik; and the fact that Froude was in holy orders naturally made the resentment all the more keen. The book was burned in the hall of Exeter College, of which Froude was a fellow, by the senior tutor, Sewell, who, in his zeal for orthodoxy, forgot the rights of property, the copy which he burned being a borrowed one. Froude resigned his fellowship, but he was still pursued with malignant hostility. Means were taken, successfully, to oust him from the headship of a Tasmanian college, which he had accepted, and men who had hitherto been his friends publicly disowned him. His father even stopped his allowance. He had to sell his books, and his financial position was very precarious, when an unknown donor saved him from worse distress by the gift, through Max Müller, of £200[1]. Such, in those days, were the penalties for freedom of thought and freedom of expression.

The capital required for the profession of letters is a bottle of ink, a pen and a sheet of paper. Froude, cut adrift from the profession for which he had been trained and forbidden to teach, was forced to try to make his living by his pen. The struggle was hard, but, after an interval shorter than many have to go through, it was successful. The most powerful influence in his literary life was that of Carlyle, whom he came to know personally in 1849. It was Carlyle who inspired Froude to write his history; it was to Carlyle that he owed his conception of Henry VIII;

[1] Max Müller's *Auld Lang Syne*.

and it was to Carlyle that he looked as his mentor and critic. "If I wrote anything," he says, "I fancied myself writing it to him, reflecting at each word what he would think of it, as a check on affectations." Discipleship of this kind is often a snare and a source of all manner of absurdities; but Froude's is an evidence of his sanity and good sense. He knew what to take and what to leave. Carlyle's dramatic conception of history, his contempt for the machine-theory of the universe, his belief in the incalculable importance of great men, even his vivid power of realising character, might afford lessons which others could learn, however imperfectly; but his style was wholly his own, and no one ever attempted to imitate it without suffering injury. This Froude saw quite clearly: he adopted Carlyle's ideas, but he formed his own style, or else he borrowed the germ of it from Newman.

After the victory was won, as well as during the years of struggle, Froude put through his hands a great deal of miscellaneous literary work. The growth of periodical literature furnished a new sort of occupation to a considerable number of men of letters, and Froude filled the office of editor of *Fraser's Magazine* from 1861 to 1874. The best products of this miscellaneous activity were gathered together in four series of *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (1867–1883), which are comparable to, and are surpassed in popularity only by, the essays of Macaulay. In these *Short Studies* Froude appears at his best. No more than his other works are they free from his besetting sin, and perhaps this is not less vitiating in reality than it is in his longer works, but at least it seems so; and on the other hand his admirable style, his tact and his instinct for all that is attractive and interesting tell with full force.

In order of publication, however, Froude's first important production, after the works of the Oxford period, was the *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada* (1856–1870). A sound understanding of the scope and purpose of this work throws a flood of light upon the author's subsequent writings and supplies a principle under which most of them may be classified. The *History* is not a mere fragment of the history of England, begin-

ning anywhere and ending when the author is tired. Froude originally intended to carry the story down to the death of Elizabeth; and he changed his plan, not that he might shorten his labour, but because he became aware that the defeat of the Armada, not the death of Elizabeth, was the true conclusion of the subject he had proposed to himself. The fall of Wolsey was the beginning of the Reformation movement in England, the defeat of the Armada marks its definitive triumph. Not only so, but the victory of England secured to Protestantism a permanent place in Europe. Had the issue of the contest been different, the probability is that the Counter-Reformation would have swept all Protestant Europe back into the fold of Catholicism, with consequences not only to Protestant countries but to Catholic ones as well, which are simply incalculable. The struggle, of course, did not end with the Armada; but its issue was then determined, and Froude's dramatic instinct led him to close with the decisive conflict.

One great object then of the *History* is to elucidate the story of the Protestant Reformation, especially in England, and to show by what means it was finally established as the ruling force over great part of Europe. This was among the causes of the bitterness of Freeman, who, as well as Stubbs, was influenced in his conception of history by the Tractarian atmosphere of Oxford. This too is what is meant by those who say that Froude never shook off the influence of Tractarianism. From partisanship, they contend, he swung round to opposition: the sun shone upon the other side of the hill; but, whether in shade or in sunshine, the hill before his eyes was still the same. However this may be, an important group of his later works deals with the Reformation and the character of Protestantism. Among independent works of this class, not to mention essays included in *Short Studies*, we find *Calvinism* (1871), *Bunyan* (1880), *Luther* (1883), *Life and Letters of Erasmus* (1894) and *Lectures on the Council of Trent* (1896).

The idea of the Reformation was undoubtedly the primary one in the mind of Froude; but he was an Englishman, proud of his country, and his patriotism deepened with the conviction, which grew with his studies, of the great part she had played in

securing permanently for the world the benefits of the Reformation. Placed between the anvil of France and the hammer of Spain, the position of England and of Elizabeth at the opening of her reign seemed almost desperate. The final triumph was partly due to good fortune; but it was also a tribute to the courage, tenacity, sense and statesmanlike qualities alike of rulers and of people. Froude saw the possibility opening for that great imperial expansion which characterises the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of English history; and so the seeds were sown from which sprang *Two Lectures on South Africa* (1880), *Oceana* (1886) and *The English in the West Indies* (1888); while *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (1872–1874), though it has another tale to tell, is nevertheless animated by the same spirit.

These works may fairly be regarded as offshoots of the great trunk history. Others are appendages to it: *The Divorce of Catharine of Aragon* (1891), *The Spanish Story of the Armada* (1892) and *English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century* (1895). The only other important works of Froude are his *Thomas Carlyle* (1882–1884) and the documents preliminary to and consequent upon it.

The most diverse judgments about Froude may be successfully defended, not, indeed, as expressions of the whole truth, but as embodying part of it. As a literary artist he has had among historians few superiors; in point of accuracy and trustworthiness, hardly any other writer of equal standing is so deplorably lax. But wide as are the varieties of view which may be justified, no excuse can be pleaded for the virulence with which Freeman pursued Froude, his grotesque exaggeration of frequently petty errors, and his outrageous rudeness of expression. Froude gains greatly in dignity by his long silence under reiterated attacks; and when at last he hit back, the honours of the controversy certainly did not rest with Freeman. Nevertheless, there is reason in the contention that the primary obligation of the historian is truth; and, among men who have specially investigated the various subjects upon which Froude has written, there is a remarkable consensus as to his astonishing inaccuracy. Those who have delved after him among the materials of English history from

Henry VIII to Elizabeth have found his citations and quotations to be crammed with inaccuracies. Westcott pronounced upon him a judgment of unwonted severity. Sir Bartle Frere[1] characterised what Froude wrote about South Africa as a succession of brilliantly expressed truths sandwiched with utterly misleading errors. The Dutch denounced his *Erasmus* as a tissue of misstatements, and Mr W. S. Lilly showed that his "abbreviated translations" frequently distorted the meaning of the great humanist. The impassioned expressions of the majority of Irish writers about Froude's *English in Ireland* will not, by most Englishmen, be accepted without large deductions; but all must be impressed when a historian so learned, so able and so impartial as Lecky pronounces one of the judgments of a brother historian to be "utterly unfounded," and, as regards one of the persons implicated, "almost grotesquely untrue[2]." Close students of the life of Carlyle are unanimous in their judgment upon Froude's biography. Professor Norton called it "a story 'founded upon fact,'" and Mr David Wilson thought he could prove about as many errors as there were pages. It ought however to be added that others as well as Freeman seem to have been irritated by Froude into exaggerating very trivial mistakes. There is no common measure between small inaccuracies of diction and spelling, and those great blunders and misrepresentations that pervert the course of history.

The charge of inaccuracy is one which has been brought against every historian in turn, and it can invariably be established. In dealing with masses of facts the man of the greatest learning, of the most untiring industry and of the keenest insight, cannot escape errors. Carlyle was deceived about the Squire letters; Macaulay, less excusably, went wrong about the Christian name of Grahame of Claverhouse; the great apostle of accuracy, Freeman, was hardly in his grave before the battle raged over him; and the *advocatus diaboli* proved his case. But it is utterly unjust to judge a man by isolated errors; and Froude's case is differentiated from the case of the other historians named by the

[1] Quoted in *The Dictionary of National Biography*.

[2] Lecky's *History of the Eighteenth Century*, II. vii. 308, n. 2.

extraordinary number of mistakes which have been proved to exist in his works. His own defence, given in *A Siding at a Railway Station*, is practically that the actual facts of history are undiscoverable. "'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate"; and the metaphysician could easily prove that he might have waited long for an answer. But the plain man feels that the difficulty of arriving at truth absolute is a poor excuse for inaccurate quotation, for a paraphrase which ordinary intelligence cannot reconcile with the meaning of the text, or for a statement of fact contradicted by the authorities on which it is supposed to be based. It is hardly possible to resist the conclusion that Froude was constitutionally inaccurate, and that he often neglected to bestow the care due to his readers upon the discovery of the facts. In this respect he did not follow his master. Carlyle worshipped truth, while Froude doubted whether it could be discovered. Carlyle gave a poetic presentation of the truth founded upon a careful study of the prosaic facts, while Froude would seem at times to have given a literary presentation of it in defiance of the facts.

Froude denied the charge of habitual misstatement; but there was another accusation levelled against him which he did not feel concerned to deny. This was the charge that he read history in the light of his own theories and judged under the influence of his own emotions. To do so was in fact necessary on Froude's theory of history; and there is great example in his favour. Neither Carlyle nor Michelet sees the French Revolution in a dry light, nor does Tacitus see the Roman emperors thus. The "personal equation" cannot be wholly eliminated from any subject less demonstrably certain than mathematics; and it is questionable whether the distortion of truth caused by it be not greater in the plodding prosaic nature, unconscious of theories, than in the intense poetic one which produces them as a fruitful field grows wheat. The ordinary reader feels that it is just the personal element in great historians that he most values; and his instinct is sound. The application of the Newtonian rule, "hypotheses non fingo," would lead back to the method of the chronicles and would strip history of nearly all its interest. Nobody can positively know what manner of man was Henry VIII, as science

knows the chemical composition of water or of air; and yet a conception of his character is essential to the comprehension of the period in which he lived. Only in rare cases can it be shown beyond doubt what were the motives behind a certain action, a treaty or a war; yet there *were* motives, through which alone we can understand the action.

The indictment which is brought against Froude is one of the weightiest that has ever been levelled against a great writer; and yet, even from the point of view of scientific history, there is another side of the account. In the first place, it must be repeated that most of the inaccuracies alleged against him are trivial. It is absurd to treat the misprint of Guienne for Guisnes as if it were a serious blunder, or to magnify into a fact of capital importance Froude's ignorance of the identity of Lexovia with Lisieux. Even his objectionable habit of marking abridgements with inverted commas is seriously reprehensible only if the abridgement does not fairly represent the meaning of the original. But further, whatever may have been Froude's errors, he unquestionably advanced the bounds of knowledge in relation to his period; and if original research be the true test of the value of a historian, he bears it far better than his inveterate critic. Freeman trusted almost wholly to printed authorities and very rarely examined a manuscript; while not only was Froude the first Englishman to examine the great collections at Simancas, but he laboured assiduously at the Record Office and at Hatfield House as well. The sand which he found glistening upon the ink often proved that his eye had been the first which had seen the document since it was put away. "I had," he says, "to cut my way through a jungle, for no one had opened the road for me[1]." The service which he did was a great one, and gratitude for it might have tempered the keenness of censure where he fell into error; while mere candour ought to have dictated an acknowledgment of the proof he gave of integrity of purpose by depositing in the British Museum his transcripts of the Simancas papers.

It is however on the purely literary side that Froude is at his best. He never fails to be interesting. The *History* may be a

[1] Paul's *Life of Froude*, 192.

"romance," *Thomas Carlyle* a "story 'founded upon fact,'" *The English in Ireland* a storehouse of "froudacities," and all the minor works similarly unsound; but they are fascinating "romances," excellent "stories," eminently readable "froudacities." Froude's admirable English gives a charm to everything he ever wrote. His is one of the purest prose styles of the nineteenth century, less mannered than Macaulay's or Matthew Arnold's, less laboured and "poetical" than Ruskin's or De Quincey's. Perhaps he never rises so high as these writers at times do; but his English is always in perfect taste, never sinking beneath the subject nor rising above it—neither mean nor turgid, but always exactly adequate. He is great on a great occasion and sufficient on an ordinary one. This unerring fitness is probably due to the fact that he never troubled himself about style as style; he was concerned merely to express his meaning, and hence he remained wholly free from affectation.

One of Froude's greatest gifts, which has been just touched upon, and which serves as salt to give savour to his writings and to preserve them, was his talent for the delineation of character. Not only his Henry VIII, but his Mary Tudor, his Mary Stuart, his Elizabeth, and, generally, all the leading characters of his history, are profoundly interesting studies. Possibly the documents do not bear out his views; Froude's Henry and Mary and Elizabeth may not be the Tudor sovereigns as they lived; but they have that interest which always attaches to dramatic creations; just as Shakespeare's King John and Richard III are interesting still, even though we may believe that the real John was more able and less mean and the real Richard more human. And if Froude's characters fail to convince they are not therefore ineffectual. Those who cannot accept his Henry VIII as the real man will almost certainly find their own conception of the imperious Tudor altered. It is not too much to say that Henry VIII has been a different figure in English history since Froude wrote about him.

The same gift is shown in the delineation of the greatest character Froude ever attempted to portray, Thomas Carlyle. The character, as he paints it, is deficient in several fine qualities

which the real Carlyle possessed,—deficient in generosity, in consideration for others, unlovable. And yet from the beginning of the long biography to the end the reader is held entranced. Working with consummate skill upon magnificent materials, Froude has constructed a character and has left a picture of life enthralling in its interest. If his *Carlyle* be one of the most misleading of biographies, it is also one of the most fascinating, and should it ever be superseded and consigned to the literary lumber-room, English readers will be the poorer by the loss of one of the most readable books in the language. In sheer literary skill even Froude never surpassed it.

Another literary masterpiece of Froude's later years was *Oceana*, the most perfect outcome (among his works) of that imperialism which ranked next to the Reformation among his historical interests. It had been fostered by his study of the Elizabethan age, and when he won greater leisure on the conclusion of his history, one of his leading objects was the development of it. The principal purpose (not very wisely pursued) of his lectures in the United States was to set England right with the great American republic. He went to Cape Colony on a political errand in 1874. He afterwards visited Australia. Few have done so much as he towards fostering that interest and pride in the colonies and that sense of their importance to the mother country which are so conspicuous in the present day, and which were so conspicuous by their absence thirty or forty years ago. *Oceana* is perhaps the most perfect piece of literature in which these feelings are expressed, though in depth and intrinsic importance it is far surpassed by Seeley's *Expansion of England* and still farther by his *Growth of British Policy*.

The transition from Froude to Freeman and Stubbs, who, with Mr Goldwin Smith and J. R. Green, were the leaders of the Oxford school of history, is like passing into a new atmosphere. For Froude, though an Oxford man, did not belong to the Oxford school, and his spirit was that of an older time. Like all recent historians, he made an investigation of authorities more elaborate and extensive than any of the eighteenth century historians, except Gibbon, deemed necessary. But his habit was to read

largely, to let the impressions produced by his reading take possession of his mind, and then to write with as little interruption for reference to authorities as possible. The Oxford historians, on the other hand, made constant reference to, and the accurate citation of, authorities a matter of conscience and duty; and they had their reward in an accuracy which caused them, for a time, to be regarded by admiring disciples as the superiors of all their predecessors. Whatever might be the case with other men, they at least might boast, like the Homeric hero, to be much better than their fathers. "Blunders or questionable statements," says the biographer of Freeman, "may be discovered in Gibbon, in Hallam, in Thirlwall, in Arnold, and, occasionally, even in Bishop Stubbs[1]." That Gibbon should be fallible is natural enough, but that Stubbs should share his fallibility is disconcerting.

After Froude it is convenient to take Freeman, who presents the sharpest contrast to him, and who was also the eldest of the Oxford group. Perhaps some of the bitterness which Freeman showed in criticism was due to disappointment. His two great ambitions were to be a professor of history, by preference at Oxford, and to be a member of Parliament. The former ambition was gratified in 1884 when he succeeded Stubbs, and the latter might have been gratified, had he chosen, two years later. But he was then old and indifferent, and he might have adapted to his own case the celebrated words of Johnson to Chesterfield. In the long interval between his marriage and retirement from Oxford in 1847 and his return as regius professor, he had contributed voluminously to periodicals of all sorts, weekly, monthly, quarterly; he had studied architecture and historical geography and written about them; he had published *The History and Conquests of the Saracens* (1856); he had begun and left unfinished *The History of Federal Government* (vol. 1, 1863); and, above all, he had completed the great work of his life, *The History of the Norman Conquest* (1867–1879), as well as its sequel, *The Reign of William Rufus* (1882). Though afterwards he had the courage to undertake *The History of Sicily* (1891–1894), he felt, not without reason, that his

[1] *Life of Freeman*, ii. 466.

work was done, and contemplated with shrinking rather than with delight the change which the Oxford professorship must make in his life. His anticipations were justified. Few lecturers are in a more trying position than those who hold professorial chairs at the two oldest English Universities, and rare are they who can make their courses popular. Freeman had not the gifts. About a year before his death he recorded that he had tried every kind of lecture he could think of, and put his best strength into all, and nobody came[1].

Freeman was a man of strong passions and opinions, and of intense personal likes and dislikes. His fidelity to his convictions was of that sort which does not shrink from making sacrifices for their sake. In 1878 he gave up a lucrative and agreeable connexion with *The Saturday Review*, because he believed its politics to be mischievous. But while he was undoubtedly honest in his opinions and manful in his acceptance of their consequences, the question whether he was judicious in the expression of them is by no means so easily settled in his favour. Those who differed from him on matters of historical detail were rated in terms which would have better befitted some capital matter of morals; and it is not beside the point to note that the violence of his language with regard to the Eastern question alienated many of his own party. From such a man we may confidently look for work thoroughly honest and conscientious; but we may reasonably doubt whether it will always be conceived and carried out in a judicial spirit.

Freeman was rather markedly averse from philosophic speculation; and, though nothing interested him more than ecclesiastical questions, he was impatient even of theology. Perhaps for this very reason the few general ideas he possessed had an extraordinary hold upon his mind; for the best way to keep one theory within proper bounds is to balance it with another. As we have already seen, Freeman learnt from Arnold the idea of the unity of history, and he insisted upon it even to weariness. When it was proposed to set up a school of modern history at Oxford the future regius professor argued

[1] *Life of Freeman*, ii. 429.

with his customary vehemence that such a step would be a violation of all principle and must prove utterly fruitless. The doctrine of unity thus insisted upon by Freeman was not only true, but it may now seem almost a truism. All human history is so clearly one that it would be waste of energy to demonstrate the unity. But in Freeman's youth history was commonly divided into water-tight compartments; ancient and modern, sacred and secular. Arnold's conception was a novelty, and time was well spent in expounding it. Freeman however fell into a characteristic mistake. He exaggerated the unity, and he insisted upon it out of season as well as in season, much as the modern school of naval strategists insists unduly upon the truth that "the sea is all one." So it is, just as the earth is all one; but on land or sea the question where a force is placed may be of vital importance. So too, while there are between the ancient world and the modern many lines of connexion—through the law of Rome, through the literature and philosophy of Greece, through the religion of Judaea,—there are also deep divisions which fully justify a broad distinction, though not complete separation. A man who was not liable to the obsession of a single idea would have tempered his doctrine of unity with this practical consideration, and would have escaped the error of denying the value of modern history as an instrument of academic education. But while Freeman fell thus into error, in another way he derived great benefit from his doctrine of unity. If some of his contemporaries have not escaped the vice of excessive specialisation, that fault cannot be charged against the historian whose special period was the Norman Conquest of England, but who has written learnedly on the Achaean League and the Swiss Bund, on the Sicels and on the Saracens. Freeman has been charged with narrowness of mind, but so far as historical lore is concerned, narrow he certainly was not.

Another general idea with which the mind of Freeman was filled was that of the supreme importance of the Teutons and their institutions in the history of England. The Teutons play as great a part in his history as the Pelasgians do in that of Niebuhr; and it is almost certain that the force and persistency of his

conception of Teutonism led him unconsciously to exaggerate on the one side and to underrate on the other. The prejudice shows itself occasionally in quaint and absurd forms; there was a sacredness about the Saxons which made Freeman follow them in the most uncouth forms of spelling; but he had no hesitation in Anglicising the names of the French, whom he disliked. It is to be feared that his prejudice shows itself also in matters infinitely more important. His account of the Teutonic conquest of the Celts is almost pure theory; and further, it is singularly unconvincing theory:—"Though the literal extirpation of a nation is an impossibility, there is every reason to believe that the Celtic inhabitants of those parts of Britain which had become English at the end of the sixth century had been as nearly extirpated as a nation can be. The women would doubtless be largely spared, but as far as the male sex is concerned, we may feel sure that death, emigration, or personal slavery were the only alternatives which the vanquished found at the hands of our fathers. The nature of the small Celtic element in our language would of itself prove the fact. Nearly every Welsh word which has found its way into English expresses some small domestic matter, such as women and slaves would be concerned with; nearly all the words belonging to the nobler occupations, all the terms of government and war, and nearly all the terms of agriculture, are thoroughly Teutonic. In short, everywhere but in Britain an intruding nation sat down by the side of an elder nation, and gradually lost itself in the mass. In Britain, so far as such a process is possible, the intruding nation altogether supplanted the elder nation[1]."

It is proverbial that "there is none so blind as he who will not see"; or, as it is otherwise expressed,

> "He that complies against his will
> Is of his own opinion still."

But there ought to be, if there is not, a converse proverb teaching what a tiny ray of light will suffice for him who is determined to see. The tenuity of evidence here, and the greatness of the superstructure built upon such a meagre foundation of fact,

[1] *The Norman Conquest*, i. 18.

are amazing. From the extent (which he underrates) and the character of the Welsh element in the English language Freeman draws the gigantic inference of a practical extirpation which he admits to be unexampled. But events which are unexampled ought to be established by unusually rigorous evidence: it is just the fact that miracles are unexampled in our experience that renders all ordinary evidence ineffectual to prove them. Further, almost in the very breath in which he alleges practical extirpation, Freeman reveals that what he himself believes in is something widely different. A race is not "nearly extirpated" if its women remain; still less is it so if the males have the alternative of "personal slavery," as well as those of death and emigration. Had those women no children? If they had children, what becomes of the Teutonic theory? With regard to the linguistic argument, it is worth asking what, on Freeman's principles, would be the natural inference could all the evidence as to the effects of the Norman Conquest be swept away, except only the evidence of language. In a delightful passage in *Ivanhoe* Wamba the Jester demonstrates to Gurth the Swineherd that pigs and sheep and oxen, so long as they are alive and a source of trouble, are Saxon; but the same animals, as soon as they are prepared for the table, take Norman names and pass to the use of the Normans. So it was then, and so it has remained to this day. What more plain, then, than that the Saxons who were not slaughtered were enslaved, and remained slaves ever after? It is true the Normans adopted their language, but that was evidently for convenience of giving orders to their serfs; and they showed their lordship by imposing their own terms as the vocabulary of the nobler occupations.

Freeman would have searched the English language for words strong enough to denounce such a travesty of argument had it been used by another historian in support of any thesis unwelcome to him. Its presence in his own work is serious, because it shows to what an extent he was capable of being blinded by his prepossessions, and how carefully his inferences, if not his facts, have to be sifted. The point is absolutely fundamental. The whole *History of the Norman Conquest* is a glorification of

Teutonism, and that work is gravely compromised if the Saxon Conquest was not such as Freeman believed it to be, or if he has not made out a reasonable case for believing it to be so. There seems to be better foundation for the view of a more recent historian, that the Norman Conquest, instead of being the triumph of Teutonism, was really the triumph of Latin civilisation over barbarism[1].

It has already been pointed out that the idea of nationality during this period attained an importance it never had before. No one was more completely under its influence than Freeman. Unity of race was almost as much a fundamental conception with him as unity of history; and he seems to have been incapable of treating dispassionately either the races he admired or the races he disliked. He is more than just to the Teutons, and a good deal less than just to the Celts and the French. Wherever the dry light of history may be found, it is not in the works of Freeman.

Freeman's admiration for Macaulay might have been expected to preserve him from some of the faults with which he is justly chargeable. His admiration was however based primarily on Macaulay's mastery of facts, wherein he was certainly a worthy follower. But there were two curious limitations to his learning. In the first place, he had an extraordinary distaste for the use of manuscript authorities: the documents on which he relied were nearly all printed. In the second place, his abhorrence of public libraries almost deprived him of such great collections as the British Museum and even the Bodleian. On the literary side he has little in common with Macaulay. His English is generally heavy. He is habitually over-emphatic and prone to the use of superlatives. He is diffuse and altogether ignorant of the art of omission. His repetitions become tedious, though it has been said that great part of his effectiveness was due to this very trick of repetition. His work often loses all form from the excessive length and number of his notes,—*disjecta membra* of history which he has failed to work up. But while Freeman's theories are questionable and his literary execution poor, those who are

[1] Davis's *England under the Normans and Angevins*.

most competent to form an opinion are emphatic in their testimony to the value of the materials gathered together and sifted by him. Even if the judgment of posterity be, as is probable, that he has written no great history, it will certainly be also that he has done much to make great history possible of execution by some successor.

With the name of Freeman there is commonly associated that of William Stubbs, who succeeded Freeman in the fellowship of Trinity College vacated by the latter on his marriage, but who preceded him in the office of regius professor of modern history. This post Stubbs held from 1866 till 1884, when he was made Bishop of Chester. Five years later his translation to the see of Oxford brought him back to the city which is most intimately associated with his fame. His absorption for the last seventeen years of his life in the administrative work of a diocese necessarily diminished his productiveness as a historian and causes the student to lament a promotion which, however well deserved and well intended, was so costly to scholarship.

There are good and sufficient reasons for the association of the name of Stubbs with that of Freeman. They were the most learned English historians of their day, they were in general agreement as to aims and methods, they were friends whose mutual admiration sometimes provoked a smile. But in almost all respects Stubbs was the greater of the two. He was by far the more attractive character. What in Freeman bordered on ferocity was in Stubbs softened and humanised into wit and humour. He could be sufficiently biting, but he was never, like Freeman, merely abusive. Both men were learned, but probably Stubbs was the more learned of the two. Each won, and deserved, a high reputation for accuracy; but the warmest friend of Freeman would not claim for him superiority over Stubbs. Neither the one nor the other merits great praise for literary art; but the work of Stubbs is less dry and formless than that of Freeman, the best passages are better, and there is far less repetition. Indeed, the style of Stubbs was naturally good, and on occasion he could rise almost to eloquence. He had a rare gift for delineating a character in a few incisive sentences. There

is some lively and excellent writing in the introductions to the volumes of the Rolls Series edited by him. But in general he is too heavily loaded with learning to be a good historical artist, and his works as a whole seem, like those of Freeman, amorphous. Caring little for the things of art, he chose the service of historical science as the better part, and deemed it incompatible with sitting at the feet of the muse of literature.

Stubbs was not only younger than Freeman but he was also, on the whole, later in his work. When he was elected professor in 1866 he had done nothing of importance except the *Registrum Sacrum Anglicanum* (1858) and the editorial work on certain volumes of the Rolls Series. It is however agreed that the introductions to those volumes are Stubbs's masterpiece; and already his reputation was so great that the professorship was offered to him although he was not a candidate. Seldom has an appointment been so amply justified by results. The *Select Charters* (1870) and *The Constitutional History of England* (1874–1878) belong to the period of the professorship. So do *The Early Plantagenets* (1876) and the *Lectures on the Study of Medieval and Modern History* (1886), though he was a bishop before the latter was published.

The chief interests of Stubbs in history were ecclesiastical and constitutional, and his fame with the general reader, to whom the Rolls Series is inaccessible, must rest mainly upon his *Constitutional History*. This work forms, with the constitutional histories of Hallam and of May, one of a series of three which together cover the whole course of English constitutional history from the beginning down to a time within living memory. The fact that the later work deals with the earlier period is illustrative of the drift of historical investigation in the time of Stubbs. Hallam began in the middle, and May, whose interest was in the present rather than the past and was practical rather than speculative, took up the thread where he dropped it. The purpose of Stubbs, on the other hand, is to trace the constitutional history of England "in its origin and development"; and his whole work is inspired with the conviction that the beginning is more than half of the whole. In a more moderate and a wiser form he

shares the belief of Freeman, whose thesis in his *Growth of the English Constitution* (1872) is that practically the whole English constitution was in operation in Saxon times, and that subsequent changes have been mere changes in detail. The work of Stubbs was unquestionably of first-rate importance. He revealed much that was previously quite unknown, and set many facts in their proper place and presented them in their true proportions. And yet, rare as was the author's talent for research, it is melancholy to reflect in what great measure his views have, even within a generation, been superseded. The life of a work of learning is scarcely longer than that of a modern battleship, the only object which rivals it in ponderousness. If we look for the work on the English constitution which is still the most living and valuable, we shall find it, not in Hallam, or in Stubbs, or in May, or in Freeman, but in Bagehot, and in Professor Dicey's *Law of the Constitution.*

In no department except that of constitutional history has the name of Stubbs been so authoritative as in all that relates to the history of the Church; and in his treatment of ecclesiastical history may be found a striking illustration of the superlative importance of the eye which sees and the mind which interprets. For a time his great reputation won acceptance for almost any view he countenanced; and when, in the appendix to the *Report of the Ecclesiastical Courts Commission*, he supported the doctrine, popular with, and perhaps vital to, the Anglican High Church party, that there was in the Middle Ages a fundamental distinction between Anglican church law and Papal canon law, so that the latter was never authoritative, though it was profoundly respected, in England, the matter was regarded as settled. The oracle had spoken, the utterance was satisfactory to clerical opinion, and, difficult as it was to bring the theory into harmony with the broad facts of history, as seen by the average layman, no one ventured to contradict him. And yet never was confidence more misplaced. In the six essays by F. W. Maitland which are gathered together in his *Roman Canon Law in the Church of England* (1898) the ground is re-examined; and while the author regards Stubbs's discourse "with reverence and admiration," he shows its

main conclusions to be absolutely untenable. In recent times there has been no such complete subversion of what may be described as a system rather than a particular conclusion. Captain Mahan's books, which have radically changed the conception of sea power, are the only ones which have produced an effect comparable to that produced by Maitland's essays. The difference between him and Stubbs is no mere point of detail, nothing analogous to a mistake as to a date, or the misquotation of a document, or a misjudgment of character. It goes to the very core of a great department of history. It is singular that this vital correction was made, not by a rival specialist in ecclesiastical history, but by a student of law who, having to write a chapter on marriage, found himself compelled to make an incursion into the unfamiliar region of ecclesiastical jurisprudence. If the method of Stubbs was scientific, its vaccine was pathetically impotent to ward off the germ of error. The worst that has been alleged against Macaulay is trivial by the side of this colossal blunder; no single charge made against Froude is comparable to it[1]. Yet there were inherent elements of greatness in Stubbs which go far to redeem even an error so gigantic; and the hand which dealt this staggering blow was the hand which also penned the words: "In his power of marshalling legal details so as to bring to view some living principle or some phase of national development he [Stubbs] has no rival and no second among Englishmen[2]."

When the foundation of Stubbs's ecclesiastical history crumbles at a touch and the edifice of Freeman's Teutonism (which was Stubbs's also) proves to be built on sand, the enquirer may well ask, where is assurance to be found? Ranke thought that the business of history was to record "was eigentlich geschehen ist"; but evidently the most difficult task of all is just to discover what

[1] The editor of Stubbs's *Letters* has persuaded himself that the world has been too hasty in coming to the conclusion that Maitland's book has settled the question against Stubbs's view. It may be so; but an unsupported expression of opinion such as this is of little value in the face of the weighty evidence adduced by Maitland. The only way to meet that is by evidence on the other side. And whence is it to come?

[2] Maitland's *English Law and the Renaissance*, 19.

this is. Stubbs and Freeman were esteemed the foremost historians of their time for knowledge of facts and for accuracy in the statement of them. But they found that facts without an interpretation were but an insignificant part of "was eigentlich geschehen ist"; and all their learning and industry and ability gave them no immunity from the most serious misapprehensions. The results hardly seem to justify the claim that their method is the only sound one, and it is safer to adopt the conclusion of Jebb, that "the Muse of History is the queen of a varied realm; and various gifts may be brought to her shrine[1]." The master of narrative, the dramatist, the seer, the satirist, the student of social science, the antiquary, each may bring his gift; and none can claim that his alone is worthy of acceptance.

The spirit and method of these two writers, and especially those of his master Freeman, are curiously combined in John Richard Green with some of the characteristics of Froude and with a style which, by its brilliancy and picturesqueness, recalls that of Macaulay. Green was a man of great personal attractiveness, a vivacious and entertaining talker, a delightful letter-writer, a master of sarcasm and of paradox. He threw himself with extreme energy and eagerness into any work which he found to do, and probably sowed the seeds of the disease which carried him off, during the years which he spent as a curate in East London, before increasing alienation from orthodox opinions led him to abandon the clerical life. His interest in history was of old date, but it was only after this event that he had much leisure for historical investigation; and ere long that had to be carried on under the difficulties inseparable from invalidism partial or complete. Much of his writing had to be done at the health resorts to which he was driven by the disease which doomed him to an early death. In the firmness with which he faced it and the gallantry with which he continued to labour in spite of weakness and suffering he resembled another victim of the same disease, Robert Louis Stevenson. Like Stevenson too Green wrote his own epitaph,—"he died learning."

The first book which won fame for Green was *A Short*

[1] Jebb's *Macaulay*, 15.

History of the English People (1874), which is by far the most popular of all such summaries. This was afterwards expanded into a *History of the English People* (1877–1880) in four volumes, which is among the best of the histories on a considerable scale embracing the whole story of England; and yet, though it corrects many of the errors of the earlier work, it is probably, on the whole, farther removed from perfection.

In these two books Green necessarily worked mainly upon the materials supplied by other men, and he has been described as a populariser rather than an original historian. If the word "populariser" is intended to state a fact, it is accurate; but if it is meant to suggest a charge, it is misleading. Under modern conditions the writer who attempts to narrate the whole of English history cannot but work upon the materials supplied by other historians. No man has ever yet been so learned as to exhaust the original authorities for all periods alike. Macaulay chose one epoch, Freeman another, Froude a third, Gardiner yet a fourth. He who would embrace all four periods, with others which they have not touched, must either unite and surpass the learning of all four men, or else take a great deal on trust and at second-hand. This unquestionably Green has done. But if his design was legitimate, as will hardly be denied, and if this was the necessary consequence of it, then this too was legitimate.

Green however aspired also to the honours of the historian who bases his work principally, if not exclusively, upon his own independent examination of original documents. *The Making of England* (1881), written, as his wife says, "under the shadow of death," and *The Conquest of England* (1883), which he left incomplete, are the outcome of original research. The former is less learned than Elton's *Origins of English History*, which was published only a year after it, and both of Green's books have been shown to contain numerous mistakes. No work of the sort, produced under such conditions as those in which Green was placed, could possibly be other than faulty; but, all things considered, the marvel is not that they are imperfect, but that they are so good.

Though Green was surpassed in learning by a considerable

number of contemporaries and predecessors, he has enough of independent merit and individuality to give him an assured place among historians. No one ever had a more vivid sense of the quasi-independent life of the component parts of a great state. A town was to him a real entity with an existence of its own, not a mere part of a greater whole; and Freeman declares that it was from Green that he learnt to look in this way upon cities[1]. This however is only a special illustration of a characteristic which pervades all Green's work. He was a poet almost as much as a historian, and that vitality which Wordsworth found in external nature was equally evident to him in all the parts and elements whose union constituted national life. Hence in great measure his popularity. In his hands nothing was, or at least nothing could long remain, dry. A bare hint, a mere fragment of evidence, was sufficient to call up before his mental eye a complete picture. No doubt this was the source of many of his mistakes. He did not sufficiently discriminate for his readers, nor probably for himself, between that which rested on solid evidence and that which was due to reconstruction by a poetic mind. The fact that he, perhaps more than any contemporary, threw his own personality into his work is at once his strength and his weakness; but it is strength far more than weakness.

Somewhat apart from these men, alike in personal history, in opinions and in methods, stood Charles Henry Pearson (1830–1894), whose *National Life and Character* (1893) won him, just before his death, the fame which his scholarly and able *Early and Middle Ages of England* (1861) had failed to gain. The latter brought him into conflict with Freeman, who attacked it with characteristic virulence in an article in *The Fortnightly Review* and was answered by Pearson in a pamphlet which he afterwards admitted to be "more savage than is justifiable," but which made Freeman "very careful after this to write anonymously[2]." In the interval between this book and *National Life and Character* Pearson had spent many years in Australia; and his active political life there and his practical study of

[1] *Life of Freeman*, i. 303.

[2] *Memorials of Pearson*, 131.

social problems profoundly influenced his later work. It is a brilliant and most suggestive production; but it is also excessively discursive, and, perhaps, a little too easy in its generalisations. There is therefore room for doubt as to whether it will wear well, or long retain its reputation, though it has the support of a good style. The mournful conclusion is stated with an impressiveness which is partly due to dignity of language, and partly to the moral elevation of the writer: "It is now more than probable that our science, our civilisation, our great and real advance in the practice of government, are only bringing us nearer to the day when the lower races will predominate in the world, when the higher races will lose their noblest element, when we shall ask nothing from the day but to live, nor from the future but that we may not deteriorate. Even so, there will still remain to us ourselves. Simply to do our work in life, and to abide the issue, if we stand erect before the eternal calm as cheerfully as our fathers faced the eternal unrest, may be nobler training for our souls than the faith in progress."

There are obvious reasons why Froude, though he was an Oxford man, should not be regarded as a member of the Oxford school of history, but those reasons do not apply to Mandell Creighton. It is true, he became professor of ecclesiastical history at Cambridge, but prior to that he had been fellow and tutor of an Oxford college, had taken part in the development of the historical school of that University and had published *The Age of Elizabeth* (1876), *Simon de Montfort* (1876), *The Tudors and the Reformation* (1876) and the first two volumes of his great work, the *History of the Papacy during the Period of the Reformation* (1882–1894), a title which became inaccurate when the author found that the pressure of other duties would prevent him from carrying the narrative farther down than the sack of Rome. Creighton was, in short, fully formed at Oxford, his methods and ideals were those of the Oxford school, and when he migrated as a professor to Cambridge it was to transplant these and let them take root with such change as the new soil might produce in them.

In its main lines the career of Creighton runs closely parallel

to that of Stubbs. Both, after a brief period of tutorial work at Oxford, retired to country livings, both were elevated to the episcopal bench, and through their absorption in administrative business both were, in the main, lost to scholarship. Stubbs however was fifty-nine when he became a bishop, while Creighton was only forty-eight; and moreover Creighton had the greater taste and talent for administration and threw himself into it with the greater zest. He had also the more difficult sphere of labour. Stubbs's dioceses of Chester and Oxford were comparatively peaceful. So was Creighton's first diocese, Peterborough; but on his translation to London he found himself in the midst of the most difficult ecclesiastical problems of the time. On the whole, his four years' administration showed an admirable combination of firmness with conciliation, illustrating that "common sense amounting to genius" which was said to be his special gift. But the controversies he could not escape completely absorbed his energies, and even had his life been prolonged Creighton could have accomplished no more work of importance in history. His fame must rest on the *History of the Papacy*.

When Creighton went to Cambridge in 1884 as professor of ecclesiastical history, Seeley had already been for fifteen years professor of modern history. The ideas and methods of the two men clashed. To Seeley's conception of history, it has been remarked with truth, the saying, "history is past politics and politics present history," applied more strictly than it did to its author, Freeman's. Seeley's aim was practical, his method philosophical. He thought that the highest part of the work of a university was to train up useful citizens, and that this could be done only by the moulding of character through ideas. It was the ideas he extracted from history, not the facts wherein they were embedded, which interested him. Thus, while the most influential of his contemporaries mined for their material in a distant past, Seeley by preference investigated recent history; while they laid enormous stress on the knowledge of detail, he made his most awakening books out of facts of common knowledge.

Creighton's conception of history was wholly unlike this; and

in his inaugural lecture he defined his own view and contrasted it with its opposite in terms which show that he had Seeley in his mind. "All differences of historical judgment," he said, "resolve themselves into differences of the conception of progress. Historians mainly differ according as their conception of progress is historical or political. By a political conception I mean one which is directly derived from the political movements or political theories of the present day, which takes as its starting-point ideas which are now prevalent, or problems which are now pressing for solution. According to this view the student of history knows exactly what he wants to find in the past. He wishes to trace the development of the principles which he himself holds and which he believes to be destined to succeed. To him the past was a failure so far as it did not follow those principles....He has no doubt that the perspective of the present is the true perspective, and draws the sketch according to its rules.

"The historical conception of progress is founded on historical experience of the evolution of human affairs. Its object is to understand the past as a whole, to note in every age the thing which was accomplished, the ideas which clothed themselves with power. It tries to estimate them in reference to the times in which they occurred. It knows no special sympathies, for it sees everywhere the working of great elemental forces which are common to human society at all times. It strives to weigh the problems of the past in their actual relations to their times, it tries to strip them of their accidental forms, and show their fundamental connexion not merely with present ideas, but with the process of man's development....I will not defend but will only state my own preference for the historical rather than the political view of progress. I turn to the past to learn its story without any preconceived opinion about what that story may be. I do not assume that one period or one line of study is more instructive than another, but I am ready to recognise the real identity of man's aspiration at all times[1]."

Of course the contrast is here far too broadly drawn. Neither Seeley nor any other historian worthy of the name ever went to

[1] Quoted in *The Life of Creighton*, i. 279–280.

history knowing exactly what he wanted to find; and on the other hand we have already seen in the cases of Freeman and Stubbs the value of that supposed superiority to preconceived opinion on which Creighton prided himself. Immunity from preconceived opinion depends less upon the conception of progress than upon breadth of mind and upon temperament. Still, exaggerated though it is, the contrast usefully indicates the difference between the two historical professors of Cambridge. The *genius loci* was on the side of Creighton, for Cambridge has always been devoted to research and patient of minutiae. "I will tell you," says the Cambridge scholar of the tale, "what Aristotle *says*; if you want to know what he *means*, you must go to Oxford."

Creighton tried to embody his own conception in his great work on the papacy, and his remarkable success is shown in the commendation of men of views opposed to his own in politics and religion. Lord Acton, the most highly qualified of all critics, though he severely criticised the third and fourth volumes, declared that the first and second were marked by a fulness and accuracy which were "prodigious in volumes which are but the prelude to an introduction, and have been composed in the intervals of severer duty[1]." But the work has all the vices as well as the merits of the school to which it belongs. It is dry and hard reading. Except a few summaries of character there is little in it that can be read with pleasure; and considering the character of Creighton, his incisiveness of phrase, his turn for epigram, his versatility, it is surprising that he has succeeded so completely in washing out all colour from his work. He seems, unfortunately, to have considered that literary grace and liveliness were snares, and that if he fell into them he would somehow become incapable of telling the truth.

Perhaps however the characteristics of the Oxford school of history are to be found in the most perfect balance not in either Stubbs or Freeman, but in Samuel Rawson Gardiner (1829–1902), a historian who recalls Hallam more than any other. The whole life of Gardiner bears witness to his disinterested and incorruptible love of truth. He had neither the power nor the desire to achieve

[1] Quoted in the *Life of Creighton*, i. 227.

popularity, and no contemporary of equal eminence was worse rewarded. For more than forty years he laboured at his design of writing a history of England from 1603 to 1660, fragments of which were published at various dates between 1863 and 1901. Though these publications were for a long time hardly noticed, Gardiner never for a moment suffered himself to be diverted from his purpose, except in so far as it was necessary to earn a modest living by work as a lecturer, an examiner, and a writer of text-books. When at last recognition came, and in 1894 he was offered the regius professorship at Oxford vacated by the death of Froude, he declined, because the work of the chair would have interfered with the task which he had set himself. He was within sight of the end at his death; but unfortunately the narrative of the last four years remained unfinished, and the historian had failed even to reach the death of Cromwell.

What makes Gardiner the best representative of his school, if not its greatest figure, is his conspicuous fairness and his success in keeping his own personality out of his work. In this he was just the opposite of Green, and he differed widely from Freeman too. Here lies the secret of his want of popularity. His work is colourless. It contains no lively delineations of character, no animated narrative, no eloquence. It is the dispassionate and level statement of the conclusions laboriously reached by one who has given unsparing labour through a lifetime to the subject. In contrast once more with Green, the impression conveyed is that of mechanism, not organism, of death, not life; and so, unjust as was the popular neglect, it was not without excuse.

No one carried to a greater extreme than Gardiner that specialisation which the methods of modern history render indispensable. He had chosen the period of the early Stuarts and the Commonwealth, and he would not willingly go beyond it even in the least degree. Perhaps in this respect he made a mistake; Freeman certainly would have thought so. If there be a real unity in history, there must be some danger of misapprehension where the attention is concentrated exclusively on a small part of it.

Gardiner stood singularly alone. Though he was only slightly

junior to Freeman and Stubbs, while he was senior to Green, it is remarkable that not a single letter from or to him is to be found in *The Life of Freeman*, or in the *Letters* of Stubbs or of Green, while innumerable evidences are to be found of constant intercourse between the other three. Unquestionably Gardiner was the loser in the worldly sense, while it seems probable that by their mutual support and hearty praise of one another the other three were raised to a reputation perhaps beyond the deserts of any of them. This feeling was expressed by Thorold Rogers in a well-known epigrammatic couplet:—

> "See, ladling butter from alternate tubs,
> Stubbs butters Freeman, Freeman butters Stubbs."

It is at least certain that the Oxford school of history acquired a pre-eminence of fame which it seems now to be hard to justify. Whatever may have been the opinion of professed students, twenty years ago the world at large did not know that the names of Lecky and Seeley were quite worthy to stand beside those of the Oxford trio; but recent years have witnessed a marked decline in the reputation of the Oxford men and a steady rise in that of the other two.

The Oxonians were indifferent to or averse from philosophy. Vigorous as was the intelligence of Stubbs, it nowhere betrays the least inclination to, or any considerable knowledge of, philosophic thought. Freeman seems to have disliked it and to have been incapable of it; and of Creighton one of the most competent of judges, Edward Caird, his tutor for the final school of *literae humaniores*, declared that "he was not specially attracted towards philosophical studies[1]." In the cases of Seeley and Lecky, on the other hand, one of the facts that first strike the student is that they are almost as much philosophers as historians. The first notable work by Lecky was *The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe* (1865), and the first of Seeley's which won great fame was the philosophico-theological *Ecce Homo* (1866). And, throughout, both play to the keynote thus struck. They are historians to whom ideas are more than facts, and the ideas are of the sort which imply a theory of human history, if not of the universe, in the background.

[1] *Life of Creighton*, i. 27.

John Robert Seeley (1834–1895) was the son of a publisher who was himself a historian of considerable power, the author of a work, *The greatest of all the Plantagenets* (1860), which has been occasionally attributed to his more famous son. The younger Seeley began life not as a historian, but as a classical lecturer in Trinity College, Cambridge, whence he passed as professor of Latin to University College, London, in succession to Francis W. Newman. It is curious that two successive occupants of the same chair should have been the authors of two such famous heretical books as *Phases of Faith* and *Ecce Homo*. In 1869 he succeeded Kingsley as professor of history at Cambridge, and the second and greater aspect of his career opens. He proved himself an admirable lecturer and teacher as well as a great historian. The *Lectures and Essays* (1870) and the *Introduction to Political Science* (1896) are conclusive evidence of the high quality of his professorial work, while *The Life and Times of Stein* (1878), *The Expansion of England* (1883), *A Short History of Napoleon I* (1886) and *The Growth of British Policy* (1895) afford a solid foundation for his fame as a historian.

Seeley's works fall readily into two divisions, in the first of which are *Ecce Homo* and *Natural Religion* (1882), while all the others which have been named fall under the second. The theological works are of interest here because they reveal at once, and more clearly than any others, that love of ideas which is the soul of Seeley's history as well. They were a puzzle to their readers, who could hardly make out what manner of man their anonymous author was, nor well understand with what purpose he had written. *Ecce Homo* seemed to stand midway between the orthodox and the purely rationalist views. It was an attempt to strip from the conception of Christ the accretions of centuries, and to view him as he might be supposed to appear to those who simply knew the facts of his life, or such facts as would be considered well attested if they referred to any other historical character. The method was the ordinary method of historical criticism: the result was, as has been said, puzzling to both parties. If the anonymous author believed no more than he affirmed, his position was highly unsatisfactory to the orthodox;

but what he affirmed was a great deal more than numbers of rationalists were prepared to concede. *Ecce Homo* dwelt almost exclusively upon the aspect of Christ as man; but it laid such stress and emphasis upon his character and influence as might have satisfied the most exacting, and necessarily suggested that the writer had not expressed his whole belief. In the preface he spoke of the book as a fragment, and promised to deal in another volume with "Christ as the creator of modern theology and religion"—phraseology which itself suggested a considerable measure of agreement with the doctrines of the Churches. And the suggestion is powerfully strengthened by the eloquent close of the book:—

"The achievement of Christ, in founding by his single will and power a structure so durable and so universal, is like no other achievement which history records. The masterpieces of the men of action are coarse and common in comparison with it, and the masterpieces of speculation flimsy and insubstantial. When we speak of it the commonplaces of admiration fail us altogether. Shall we speak of the originality of the design, of the skill displayed in the execution? All such terms are inadequate. Originality and contriving skill operated indeed, but, as it were, implicitly. The creative effort which produced that against which, it is said, the gates of hell shall not prevail, cannot be analyzed. No architects' designs were furnished for the New Jerusalem, no committee drew up rules for the Universal Commonwealth. If in the works of Nature we can trace the indications of calculation, of a struggle with difficulties, of precaution, of ingenuity, then in Christ's work it may be that the same indications occur. But these inferior and secondary powers were not consciously exercised; they were implicitly present in the manifold yet single creative act. The inconceivable work was done in calmness; before the eyes of men it was noiselessly accomplished, attracting little attention. Who can describe that which unites men? Who has entered into the formation of speech which is the symbol of their union? Who can describe exhaustively the origin of civil society? He who can do these things can explain the origin of the Christian Church. For others it must be enough to say,

'the Holy Ghost fell on those that believed.' No man saw the building of the New Jerusalem, the workmen crowded together, the unfinished walls and unpaved streets: no man heard the clink of trowel and pickaxe: it *descended out of heaven from God.*"

It is a far cry from the fifteenth chapter of Gibbon to this. If the author of *Ecce Homo* had not traversed the whole distance back to the position of the Churches, it might seem that he had at least gone a long way. But the promised sequel, when it appeared, was calculated to shake confidence in that conclusion. *Natural Religion*, indeed, is not properly a sequel to *Ecce Homo* at all: it is not the promised volume dealing with "Christ as the creator of modern theology and religion." It still bears witness to the author's profound sense of the importance of religion, which he declares to be "the principle by which alone life is redeemed from secularity and animalism"; and it insists upon the insufficiency of science unless science is itself religious. But then the religion which remains and which is so important is wholly devoid of the supernatural. *Natural Religion* is an attempt, not to show how much of that which is commonly conceived to be Christianity is true, but that, even if the creeds of the Churches become wholly incredible, what is vital in religion will still remain. Had the opinions of Seeley himself changed in the interval of sixteen years? The difference between the two books suggests an affirmative answer; and in the later we seem to see rather the student of Goethe than the disciple of Christ. *Natural Religion* never attained the popularity of *Ecce Homo*. There was less warmth in the style, not because Seeley wrote less skilfully, but because the character of the book demanded a colder and more colourless treatment. But what was lost in attractiveness was gained in philosophic depth. The author of *Natural Religion* had conclusively proved his rare capacity for handling whatsoever abstract ideas he might choose to take up.

In the meantime Seeley had made the transition to history, and had produced his longest and, in point of research and learning, his greatest book, the *Life and Times of Stein*. But if in this respect the greatest, from some other points of view it is the least satisfactory, of his works. It neither is nor attempts to be a

great biography, for Seeley never shared Carlyle's interest in the biographic side of history. The emphasis therefore is on the times, rather than on the life, of Stein. The theme is really the revival of Prussia and her rise against Napoleon, for whom Seeley had a moral dislike, and whom he underrated intellectually.

Even in *Stein* Seeley's predilection for ideas rather than narrative, though obscured by the complexity of the subject, is evident enough to the careful reader: it is obtruded upon the most careless in his highly characteristic *Expansion of England* and *Growth of British Policy*. The two books are closely connected with one another. The former deals with the foreign policy of England in the eighteenth century, calling special attention to the marvellous growth of the British Empire and to the vital importance of that growth as a fact in the history of the world. The latter takes a wider and more complete view of foreign policy from the accession of Elizabeth to the union of the Parliaments of England and Scotland. In substance it is the greater of the two; but it was incomplete when Seeley died, and in style it cannot be compared with his finished work.

No two books illustrate better than these the value of a guiding conception and a point of view. Rough and unfinished as is *The Growth of British Policy*, it is fascinating from beginning to end. The author keeps steadily in mind what he wants to accomplish and rigidly excludes whatever is extraneous to his object. The consequence is that few historical works are more effective. No two books, again, better illustrate how much can be done, simply by the skilful interpretation of the commonly known facts of history. In one sense there is little or nothing 'original' in them; there is no such amassing of fresh material as we find in Stubbs and Freeman, and in Seeley's own *Stein*. But in another and a deeper sense there are probably no historical works of the nineteenth century which are more profoundly original. The facts, familiar to historians as nearly all of them were, are regarded in a new light and take a new meaning from the setting in which they are placed. For England, Seeley may be said to have created Foreign Policy as a department of history. "While we

have," he says, "entered early into the conception of constitutional history, and have seen in this department first a Hallam and then a Stubbs, we have scarcely yet perceived that Constitutional History requires the History of Policy as its correlative[1]." It was Seeley's work to supply the deficiency; and, whether from the nature of the subject or on account of his own skill, in doing so he contrived to impart to his books incomparably greater interest than either of the constitutional historians gave to his. To Seeley, as to the great artists in history of old, history is living, not dead, and his readers too feel the pulse of life.

The conception which inspired all Seeley's work was the conception of the State, not as an abstraction, or as a mechanical system of wheels and pinions, but as a great organic reality, the inspiration of the higher life, something which could be *felt*, but which could by no means be reduced to logical formulae. "Who can describe that which unites men?...Who can describe exhaustively the origin of civil society?" The key to his teaching is the conviction that his business as a professor was to train citizens, not merely to impart learning. It is the key also to his religion. Central in position in *Ecce Homo*, and central also in importance, is the chapter on "the enthusiasm of humanity." It is the social side of Christianity that attracts him; and in *Natural Religion* it is the power of religion, not to 'save,' as it is phrased, an individual soul, but to elevate the life of man as a social being, which causes him to treat that wherein this power inheres as the supremely important thing. And so it is too in his historical work. In *The Growth of British Policy* he dwells upon the pride and confidence in England which sprang from the defeat of Spain, and that pride and confidence are the inspiration of his own work. He was one of the earliest and most efficient of the workers who have combated the conception, prevalent in the middle of the nineteenth century, that colonies were a burden and a danger, and who have advocated the federation of the British Empire. Probably no single work has done so much towards this end as *The Expansion of England*.

The philosophic tastes and tendency of Seeley were shared to

[1] *Growth of British Policy*, i. 2.

the full by William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838–1903); and it may be remarked in passing that the two had also in common a touch of the poetic spirit. Seeley's first publication was a volume of verse entitled *David and Jonathan*, while Lecky a generation later published a volume of *Poems* (1891) of considerable, if not very high, merit. In Lecky's case also, as in Seeley's, the philosophic side showed itself first, his earliest work of note being the *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*. It is a work of high value in itself, and quite marvellous when regarded as the production of a young man of twenty-seven. The world asked in astonishment by what magic he had been able to crowd into so few years such a mass of reading, and wondered still more perhaps at the character than at the extent of the reading. There had been no pioneers, in English at least, on the road the young author had traversed. He had been regularly educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and had taken his degree there; but the reading shown in *Rationalism in Europe* lay far out of the beaten track of colleges and universities. In point of fact, Lecky had browsed at his own will among the libraries of Northern Italy, had found his own way and developed his own interests. To this must be ascribed that freshness which is one of the great charms of the book. Very rarely has a man so young written a book so fully his own. The rationalistic spirit was, of course, no new thing, or there would have been no history of it to write; but Lecky had gathered the facts and opinions for himself, and he marshalled them in a way entirely his own. No English writer had yet treated the subject in the spirit of a historian. Hurst's *History of Rationalism*, which was published in the same year with Lecky's book, is the work of a partisan; and though Draper's *Intellectual Development of Europe* (1862) has some points in common with Lecky's *Rationalism*, it does not substantially detract from the originality of the latter. His book seemed to be the outcome of a mind neither purely philosophical nor purely historical. On the one hand, Lecky showed little interest in abstract ideas as such; on the other hand, the facts he culled out were facts which either embodied or could be used to illustrate ideas. Although

his purely philosophic endowment was not of the highest order, probably no man then living had shown the power to combine in equal degree a grasp of facts with mastery of principle.

The same tendencies, in greater maturity and combined with still wider learning, are visible in the *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (1869), which many regard as the greatest of all Lecky's works. The very title proclaims that this is not a "history" in the sense of a narrative of events. Still less is it a treatise on ethics or a history of ethical systems. Its aim is to extract from the period reviewed the moral conceptions which actually prevailed then, to explain their rise and influence, to trace the changes they underwent, and to account for the decay of such as did decay. The task was a gigantic one, and the success of the writer is all the more astonishing because here again he had no predecessors. There were histories of ethics, histories of institutions and general histories of the period, but there was no history of morals in the sense in which Lecky conceived it. The high value of his performance was at once recognised by the translation of his book into German and by its adoption as a text-book in German universities.

The point of view of Lecky is more sceptical than that of Seeley. Though the historian of rationalism was one of the most impartial of men, there can be no doubt that his own sympathies are all with the rationalists; and in the *History of European Morals* the treatment of monasticism is certainly not sympathetic. One of Lecky's greatest faults is his tendency to judge the past too much by the standard of the present. He was far too well read and far too thoughtful to do this in a gross way, but in his treatment of the monks he seems to make inadequate allowance for the difference between modern and mediæval times.

The longest and most purely historical of Lecky's works, the *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (1878–1890), is a work so planned and executed that it scarcely comes into competition with the histories of Lord Stanhope (1805–1875) or with the *Reign of Queen Anne* (1880) by John Hill Burton (1809–1881) the historian of Scotland. Burton's book, like his *History of Scotland* (1867–1870), is a plain,

straightforward, conscientious, but unadorned and somewhat uninspiring, narrative, which justly lays great stress on the immense importance of the union of the Parliaments. Stanhope's series of works, which together cover the greater part of the eighteenth century, are probably, in their pedestrian way, the best general account of the period conceived as a simple succession of events. Lecky's aim is different, and the value of his work incomparably higher. Both in plan and in execution it shows the hand, not of the annalist, but of the philosophic historian. There were great wars during the period; but the reader must go elsewhere for a satisfactory account of them. What the historian aims at is "to disengage from the great mass of facts those which relate to the permanent forces of the nation, or which indicate some of the more enduring features of national life." The student whose principal interest is in political philosophy will find Lecky admirable.

Lecky has been already spoken of as one of the most impartial of men. As an Irishman, he had need of all his impartiality in writing his history. Much of it deals with the affairs of Ireland; and, whether as to the relations of England with Ireland, or as to the relations between Protestant and Catholic in Ireland itself, few writers, either English or Irish, have been able to preserve even the semblance of fairness. Lecky almost alone completely succeeds. It is evident that his history is the work of a patriotic Irishman; but his patriotism is thoroughly sane and sensible, and there is no distortion of facts.

In his later years Lecky reverted once again to the more directly philosophic mode of treatment. His *Democracy and Liberty* (1896) is one of the best criticisms of modern democracy by one who does not believe in it; and the much weaker *Map of Life* (1899) is likewise the work of a reflective spirit. Though Lecky was a Liberal in politics there was a fundamental conservatism in his mind which is nowhere more plainly seen than in *Democracy and Liberty*. He had looked upon the development of modern democracy not without anxiety. He saw the fallacy of the argument from ancient to modern democracy; and his object was to point out certain dangers which he believed to be involved

in a continuance of the democratic development, and even to be inherent in the existing condition of affairs. The danger which he specially dreaded was that of interference with the liberty of the individual. While he would have admitted that there was a certain fanaticism in the assertion by the Manchester school of the rights of the individual, he thought that there was a tendency to underestimate the truth contained in its teaching and to go too far in the opposite direction. Even those who differ from him must admit that his case is well stated and vigorously argued.

The great historians of the older time rarely filled professorial chairs. Neither Hume nor Gibbon nor Macaulay nor Carlyle ever did so. But the increased prominence given to history as an item in education brought about a great change, and in the intermediate and later parts of the Victorian era what had previously been exceptional became the rule. We have already had numerous examples, and two more still remain to notice. The death of Seeley did not produce that decline in the historical standard of Cambridge which many at the time anticipated. On the contrary, in point of learning at least, it was distinctly raised by the appointment of John Dalberg Acton, Lord Acton (1834–1902). Of two Cambridge theologians, Lightfoot and Hort, Acton has declared that they "were critical scholars whom neither German nor Frenchman has surpassed." The words might be adapted to himself. Probably Europe possessed no man more deeply versed in historical lore than he. His position as a writer, however, is much lower than that which he deserves as a scholar; and it is unfortunate that the greater part of his immense learning was buried in his grave. The history of liberty which he planned was left unfinished; and that fragment, with the posthumous volume of lectures, the letters of Quirinus on the Œcumenical Council of 1869–1870 and some scattered articles here and there, very inadequately represents his profound scholarship and his great force.

A man who reads an octavo volume a day and writes little or nothing usually belongs to the tribe of Dryasdust, and it has sometimes been assumed that Acton too belonged to it. But the lectures prove the assumption to be wholly unfounded. No

historian of recent times is richer in ideas, none more successfully subordinates detail to general conceptions. The lecture on Peter the Great and the Rise of Prussia is an illustration; so is the inaugural lecture, by far the finest of the literary remains of Acton. It embodies his conception of the function of history, which he held to be primarily ethical. "I exhort you," he says, "never to debase the moral currency or to lower the standard of rectitude, but to try others by the final maxim that governs your own lives, and to suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong."..." If, in our uncertainty, we must often err, it may be sometimes better to risk excess in rigour than in indulgence, for then at least we do no injury by loss of principle."..." Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity[1]." The writer of these sentences evidently contemplated the moral law with an awe as profound as Kant's; and all that he has written goes to show that they express principles which were always before his mind. No one has insisted more upon the historian's duty to judge; and, alas, all his learning only led him to the conclusion that he would probably have to condemn. He quotes with approval Bayle's saying, "It is more probable that the secret motives of an indifferent action are bad than good[2]."

If he did not stand alone as a historical moralist, Acton at least carried the theory that the function of history is ethical farther than any one else, except perhaps a man whom he did not admire, Carlyle. For, though his judgments are expressed in a widely different way, Carlyle too is always a judge, and his judgments are always grounded on ethical conceptions. In other respects also Acton stood apart from the majority of his contemporaries. Surrounded by nationalist historians, he drew his lessons from universal history. In a period of specialisation, when each man had his field marked out, and the field was usually defined by chronological limits, Acton refused to be so bound. "Study problems in preference to periods," he says; "for instance: the derivation of Luther, the scientific influence of

[1] *Inaugural Lecture.* [2] *ibid.*

Bacon, the predecessors of Adam Smith, the mediæval masters of Rousseau, the consistency of Burke, the identity of the first Whig[1]." And he honoured his own advice by selecting for the work of his life the history of liberty.

It would be wrong to say that Acton escaped the errors which beset the man of immense learning. If he had been less insatiable for knowledge he would have been more productive. And the "cloud of witnesses" whom he adduces in the notes in support and in illustration of the inaugural lecture show, at least incipiently, the tendency of mere learning to lose the sense of proportion and the capacity to measure relative importance. The stores carried in the memory which could supply those illustrations must have been prodigious, but in many cases the reader is tempted to ask whether the point was worth illustrating.

The second of the two historians referred to was also a Cambridge professor; but the chair held by Frederic William Maitland (1850–1906) was one of law, not of history. Notwithstanding the proverbial danger of prophecy, it is safe to say that no English scholar of the last half-century is more likely than Maitland to stand higher in reputation in the year 2000 than he does now. Several reasons may be given for this judgment. In the first place, most of his writings are highly technical, so that, while the verdict of scholars, both in England and on the Continent, has already been given emphatically in his favour, he remains practically unknown to the personage called 'the general reader.' He is not known even as Stubbs and Freeman are known; and the notices of his untimely death made it evident that, though the writers were aware that a great scholar had passed away, most of them did not know him as even the peer of either of these men, still less as their superior. *The History of English Law before Edward I* (1895) which he wrote in conjunction with Sir F. Pollock, *Domesday Book and Beyond* (1897), consisting of essays originally intended for, but not incorporated in, the former work, and the Ford lectures on *Township and Borough* (1898), all deal with subjects which are caviare to the general. Many, who would delight in Maitland's pungency and would keenly appreciate

[1] *Inaugural Lecture.*

his lightness of touch, are prevented from making acquaintance with them by fear of the dryness of the subject. In Maitland's hands no subject is dry; and this fact is another ground for confidence in the permanence of his reputation. Few men have ever possessed such a gift for making everything he dealt with readable. Perhaps still fewer have possessed his masterly power of handling evidence. *Domesday Book* is full of instances. Outside Maitland's own writings it would be difficult to produce a parallel to the treatment of the question of old English land measures, such as the hide. It is penetrating, it is lucid, it is terse. Without a word of needless ornament, without the omission of an item of evidence, the subject is made to yield new meaning to the ripest scholar, while it becomes interesting to the reader whose knowledge is all derived from Maitland himself. English historical literature contains no better example of the importance of the mind which is brought to bear on a document. *Domesday Book* is open to all, but it will no more yield its meaning without a genius for interpretation than the flower will yield its honey except to the bee.

By reason of these gifts, Maitland, notwithstanding the technicality of his subjects and the scientific severity of his method, is an ornament to literature as well as to scholarship. He is never smothered under facts, he has always an outlook beyond the particular point he has in view. When, for a too brief moment, he gives himself free scope on the heights, as in *English Law and the Renaissance* (1901), he is delightful. But his greatest achievement is his *Roman Canon Law in England*, which has been already mentioned in connexion with Stubbs. The rank of a historian must depend, to a considerable extent, upon the influence of his work; and, measured in this way, Maitland stands easily first among his contemporaries. It falls to the lot of few historians, even of the highest rank, to overthrow a great theory and to sweep into the rubbish heap a whole literature. But this is what Maitland has done. Unless the future brings some answer of which there is as yet not so much as a hint, and the lines of which it is difficult even to conceive, all that has been written about ecclesiastical history on the basis of the report of

the Ecclesiastical Courts Commission of 1883 is as antiquated as the pre-Copernican astronomy, and the foundation of the High Anglican theory in vogue since the Tractarian movement has crumbled into ruin. Yet nothing is more remarkable than the blindness to these facts displayed in most of the obituary notices of Maitland. They are the greatest facts of his life and work; professional historians know them well, and, except where they are swayed by clerical prejudice, acknowledge them freely and teach in accordance with them. But many of the writers of obituary notices of historians are not professional historians.

Here then is another, and the chief, reason for the conviction that Maitland is destined to a higher and wider fame in the future than he now enjoys. The profound significance of his work is at present concealed. The policy of the ostrich with his head in the sand is followed in many, probably in most, of the dioceses of England, and the Church history which is taught to and required of candidates for ordination is that which Maitland has demonstrated to be erroneous. Nelson proved once that there might be wisdom in putting the telescope to the blind eye; but no one has ever shown that shutting the eyes will extinguish the sun at noon-day. When the light which Maitland sheds at last penetrates to places at present artificially darkened, it will be found that no modern historian whatsoever has effected a more momentous revolution.

Among the numerous historians who have been mentioned, it seems strange at first sight that there is none, except Carlyle, who devoted any capital work to the tremendous events which, at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, transformed Europe. In French and German Taine and Thiers and Michelet and Sybel told the story of the Revolution; but English writers preferred to go farther back, or, when they did study the period, like Seeley, they threw their work into biographic form. They were deterred, doubtless, by the feeling that the events were not yet sufficiently distant to be seen in true historical perspective, and perhaps, in part, by the sense that the ground was already occupied by a writer of secondary rank. Sir Archibald Alison (1792–1867), son of the

Archibald Alison who was once famous as the author of an *Essay on Taste*, laboriously wrote a *History of Europe during the French Revolution* (1833–1842) which won great popularity because, with all its verbosity and dulness and Toryism, it was the best account in English of events in which all were profoundly interested. Alison afterwards continued the narrative from 1815 to 1852, traversing in this latter part the ground covered also by Harriet Martineau's equally prejudiced, but far more lively, *History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace* (1849–1850).

If however the period has given us no great general history of the gigantic contest, there are few of its historical products more valuable in themselves than Napier's great *History of the War in the Peninsula and the South of France* (1828–1840) and fewer still of as high literary quality. Rich as the period has been in historians, in no department has it so clearly surpassed all previous times as in that of military history. Napier's *Peninsular War* is the best of all military histories in the English language, and the works of Kinglake, of Sir Edward Bruce Hamley, of C. C. Chesney and of George Francis R. Henderson, form a group which it would be hard to equal in any other period. Henderson's *Stonewall Jackson* stands as eminent among military biographies as Napier's work among military histories; and though Kinglake's *Crimea* has obvious faults, it is probably the most adequate account of a war ever written by a civilian.

Sir William Francis Patrick Napier (1785–1860) was one of those favoured men on whom nature seems to have showered every gift. His physical development was magnificent, and he was so handsome that, his biographer says, "in his youth his head and face might have served for a portrait of the war god." His books show clearly enough the greatness of his intellectual endowment, but hardly its full scope. He was a painter and a sculptor of sufficient ability to be elected an honorary member of the Royal Academy, and many a passage in the *History* shows how valuable was the artist's eye to the author. He was not only by profession a soldier, but a member of a family than which none has been more prominent in the military history of Britain. He was brother to the great Sir Charles Napier the story of whose

campaigns he tells in his *Conquest of Scinde* (1845), a book which, for the sake of the author's fame as a historian, would be better forgotten. Not only is it inferior in literary merit to the history of the Peninsular War, but still more in tone and temper. It is pervaded with the spirit of controversy; and though in essentials Napier was in the right, the want of the judicial spirit is everywhere too patent.

As historian of the Peninsular War Napier enjoyed rare advantages. Not only was he a soldier, but he was also a scientific student of his profession. He had himself fought in the Peninsula. He understood the difficulties and advantages of the ground; he understood the character of the people; he familiarly knew many actors in the stirring scenes which he depicts; he had seen and talked with others, through some of whom he had access to valuable papers, on the French side as well as on the English. The papers of Soult were placed at his disposal; and though Wellington did not accede without reserve to his request for documents, he gave the historian very considerable help, both by papers and by conversation. On the whole, Napier made excellent use of his opportunities. It is true he cannot be called an unprejudiced historian. He had strong likes and dislikes, and never hesitated to express them. No one could pay a more magnificent compliment, and, on the other hand, no one was more fearless in censure when he thought censure was deserved. The one tendency is seen in his panegyrics on the Light Division, and especially in his emphatic praise of one of the regiments of that division, the 52nd, which he declared to be "unsurpassed in arms since arms were borne by men." It is seen also in his idealisation of Napoleon—an honourable fault when we consider the virulence of English public opinion at that time—and in the noble sentences in which he sketches the person and character of Sir John Moore. The other side is seen in nearly every reference to the Spaniards. "No good act," says the latest historian of the war, "done by a Spanish Junta or a Tory minister is ever acknowledged by Napier[1]." It is seen no less in his censures on individual

[1] Oman's *Peninsular War*, i. 499 n.

officers, as for example Beresford. Disapproval of some of these strictures was one of the motives which induced Wellington to consent to the publication of his *Dispatches*.

But though Napier's colours may be a little too black in one place and too bright in another, his history is likely to remain for ever the classical account of the great contest in the Spanish Peninsula. His technical skill enables him to go at once to the heart of a military problem, and to discriminate between what is essential and what is subordinate. His analyses of campaigns are always illuminative. His judgments, notwithstanding the faults already mentioned, are never ungenerous in spirit. He is careful to avoid the vulgar error of imputing blame to a general merely because he has been unsuccessful. Soult was unsuccessful; but Napier does full justice to his great qualities. Indeed, one of the most pleasant characteristics of the history is its generous tone towards the French. Napier rightly refused to believe a great many of the charges which were brought against them of outrages on the Spaniards. He shows that many of the complaints were absolutely baseless, while others were founded upon actions which were almost forced upon the French by the nature of their struggle with the guerillas; and he points unanswerably to the fact that, though Wellington denounced such treatment when it was directed against his Spanish allies, he himself was forced to threaten similar action against the French peasants when the course of the war brought him among them.

In style Napier is habitually plain and unpretentious. He tells a simple story with soldier-like directness, and the impression generally produced is that of exact sufficiency for the purpose. But while this is true of the ordinary level of the narrative, no one is more capable than he of rising to the height of a great occasion. The fame of his battle-pieces is due to the fact that the sense of conflict stirs his blood like the sound of a trumpet, and the plain narrative passes by an unforced transition into lofty eloquence. The celebrated description of Albuera, which by itself would secure to Napier a position among the masters of English prose, is only the greatest of many great pictures of battle.

The next European war in which England was engaged after the fall of Napoleon found its historian in Alexander William Kinglake (1809–1891). While Napier was a soldier who was led by interest in his profession to write books, Kinglake was a man of letters whom circumstances and an adventurous disposition led to write the history of a war. To this adventurous disposition was due likewise that other book upon which, in the opinion of many, Kinglake's position in literature is more securely based than on his *Invasion of the Crimea* (1863–1887). He travelled in the East at a time when the East was much less known and far more difficult of access than it is now. In Syria and the neighbouring countries he had his share of adventures; but *Eöthen* (1844) is not a story of adventure, nor is it an ordinary narrative of a traveller's journeys from one interesting place to another. Neither does it describe the places visited. But it holds a higher place in literature, and shows a talent far rarer, than books which do all these things. *Eöthen* charms because, in the first place, it is a masterpiece of literary craftsmanship, and because, in the second place, it nevertheless gives the impression of being, as it really is, a work of quite unusual sincerity. This was the aspect of it which most forcibly struck the readers of the time. In particular it struck Eliot Warburton, author of *The Crescent and the Cross* (1845), one of the few books of travel which have some share of the fascination of *Eöthen*. In a remarkably able review in *The Quarterly* Warburton says emphatically, "This is a real book—not a *sham*." What, it may be asked, is the source of this impression? And the answer is that of all books dealing with the oldest regions in history, *Eöthen* is the least conventional. The author is always himself the centre, and what he records with unshrinking fidelity are his own emotions and impressions in face of the most famous scenes on earth. The fact that their nature can never be predicted heightens the charm of the book: it has the same kind of attraction as a masterly—that is, a perfectly sincere—autobiography. This is a quality rare in itself: it is still more rare in combination with careful literary art. The style of *Eöthen* seems easy, at times almost careless. But Kinglake was in reality a fastidious and laborious writer, and never more so

than in this volume. The journey which it records was undertaken in 1835, and great part of the nine years intervening between it and the publication of his book was devoted to the writing and rewriting of *Eöthen*.

This was the practised and polished writer who became the historian of the Crimean War. Though Kinglake was a civilian, he had already made acquaintance with military operations. He had been in Algiers in 1845, had accompanied the forces of St Arnaud, and had carried away impressions of the man and of his methods, and of other Frenchmen as well, which are deeply stamped upon his history. In 1854 the stir of war attracted him once more, and, though he had no official position in connexion with the English army, he accompanied the allied forces on their voyage across the Black Sea. A man so interesting and so accomplished naturally attracted notice. He became acquainted with Lord Raglan, and after Raglan's death Lady Raglan put in his hands her husband's papers. He thus became, in a sense, the apologist of the English general, and, without conscious falsification, he certainly showed himself willing enough to play the part of an advocate.

These two great military histories, *The Invasion of the Crimea* and the *War in the Peninsula* do not differ widely in length, but they are totally different in scale. Kinglake's period embraces less than two years, Napier's about six. The invasion of the Crimea was conducted along a single line and there were practically no digressions. Napier has to give the history of campaigns on the Douro, on the Tagus, in Andalusia, in Valencia, in Galicia. Three great battles and a siege constitute the substance of the Crimean operations. A dozen battles, innumerable combats and three great sieges constitute the English share alone of the operations in the Peninsula. Kinglake gives the bulk of a volume to each battle; Napier can spare to each only a few pages. Albuera and Inkerman were both emphatically soldiers' battles. In Napier the description of Albuera, with the immortal passage at the close, occupies about eight pages; while that of Inkerman, in the cabinet edition of Kinglake, fills more than four hundred. The contrast is similar if we take a general's battle.

Napier considered Salamanca the greatest of Wellington's battles; and he describes it in nine pages. Kinglake labours, not very successfully, to prove that the Alma was won by the genius of Raglan; and he dwells on the battle through three hundred pages. In a word, although the *History of the War in the Peninsula* is long, it is nevertheless a very condensed account of a vast and complicated struggle, while *The Invasion of the Crimea* is not only long but diffuse. This was a vice of the time as well as of the man. We are accustomed to think of the last generation or two as a peculiarly strenuous and busy period; but nevertheless they have produced a number of literary works, and especially works of a historical character, on a scale hardly paralleled by anything written in earlier ages. Macaulay shows the same weakness. Ten pages are devoted to the death of Charles I; the siege of Londonderry fills nearly one hundred; five large volumes are required for the history of some sixteen years. The whole world would hardly contain its own history written upon this scale.

The result is, no doubt, due in part to the more exhaustive research of modern writers; but it cannot be ascribed solely, or even principally, to that cause. The facility for the diffusion of books on a great scale, which is afforded by the art of printing and by the cheapening of production, has tempted authors to forget the great arts of condensation and omission. Tacitus and Thucydides were forced to be brief, and, in consequence, they aimed at revealing the soul and inner meaning of the history of their period, while the two moderns are far more concerned about picturesqueness. And they assuredly attain their end.

In this point again there is a vital difference between Napier and Kinglake. The former is preoccupied with questions of military science. He does not frequently name subordinate officers, and scarcely ever unless there is strong reason for doing so. He rarely narrates those isolated incidents and adventures in which war is so prolific, yet, when he does, it is with an effect which shows that his abstinence is due to no want of skill. The reader does not readily forget his story of the French cavalry officer who, discovering at the moment of making

a cut at an Englishman that his adversary had only one arm, chivalrously raised his sword to the salute and rode on; still less can he forget that ghastly story of Massena's retreat, which in two or three sentences reveals all the horrors of war:—"During this march, in an obscure place among the hills, a large house was discovered filled with starving persons. Above thirty women and children were already dead, and sitting by the bodies were fifteen or sixteen living beings, of whom only one was a man, and all so enfeebled as to be unable to swallow the little food that could be offered to them. The youngest had fallen first, all the children were dead, none were emaciated, but the muscles of their faces were invariably drawn transversely, giving a laughing appearance unimaginably ghastly. The man seemed most eager for life, the women patient and resigned, and they had carefully covered and arranged the bodies of the dead[1]!"

Had Kinglake told these stories he would have given the name, rank and regiment of the one-armed Englishman, and specified the battle in which he lost his arm; and he would have moved heaven and earth to discover like details about the Frenchman too. Probably he would have avoided the gruesome story, but had he narrated it, he would certainly not have done so in the terse style of Napier. And the anecdotes he tells are incomparably more numerous. He takes a Homeric delight in the personal exploits of his fighters, and, unlike Napier, he never passes over a name that has any relevance to the struggle he is describing, or omits a detail which may help to give it vividness. Thus, in the description of the charge of the Heavy Brigade at Balaclava, the three companions of Scarlett in front of the advancing line are carefully specified; and when, in the midst of the fight, it became necessary to rally the Greys, this is how the attempt is described:—

"Alexander Miller, the acting Adjutant of the Greys, was famous in his regiment for the mighty volume of sound which he drove through the air when he gave the word of command. Over all the clangour of arms, and all the multitudinous uproar, his

[1] *The War in the Peninsula*, III. xii. iii.

single voice got dominion. It thundered out 'Rally!' Then, still louder, it thundered, 'The Greys!'

"The Adjutant, as it chanced, was so mounted that his vast, superb form rose high over the men of even his own regiment, and rose still higher over the throng of the Russians. Seized at once by the mighty sound, and turning to whence it came, numbers of the Scots saw their towering Adjutant with his reeking sword high in the air, and again they heard him cry, 'Rally!'—again hurl his voice at 'The Greys[1].'"

Here we learn in many words the great facts that Adjutant Miller was a large man, that he had a mighty voice, and that he shouted out, "Rally, the Greys!" Though this is an unusually pronounced specimen of an extremely verbose style, it is characteristic. There is far too much of this sort of inflation in *The Invasion of the Crimea*. And yet the style has great merits too. It is lucid, it is interesting, and it is highly pictorial. No one who cares for military history at all will voluntarily lay down one of Kinglake's battle volumes until he has finished it. Thanks to him, the Crimean battles are known as no other battles in English history, Waterloo not excepted, are known. Possibly Inkerman, so heroic but so destitute of thought or of plan, could not have been adequately described in any other way; and few would willingly forgo that thrilling story of dauntless gallantry. The condensed style of Napier's Albuera is far greater, but it cannot give that knowledge of the daring and endurance of the individual soldier which Kinglake's ample narrative conveys.

There are thus compensations for the vices, serious as they are, of Kinglake's style; but *The Invasion of the Crimea* has other faults for which there are no compensations. Kinglake was very far from being an impartial writer. As has been already hinted, he obviously held a brief for Raglan, as he did also for Lord Stratford de Redcliffe. It is difficult to believe that anybody ever exercised quite such an overwhelming personal ascendancy as he ascribes both to the general and to the diplomatist. On the other hand, he was equally whole-hearted in his dislikes. In Napoleon III and in Marshal St Arnaud he could see no virtues;

[1] *The Invasion of the Crimea*, v. 153.

but, though the portrait of the former is etched with vitriol, it is masterly. On the political side his history is untrustworthy. Gladstone declared that, as to the matter within his cognisance, it was entirely void of resemblance to the truth, and pronounced the book "too bad to live, and too good to die[1]."

The accomplished Edward Bruce Hamley (1824–1893), novelist and parodist as well as military historian, told long afterwards in more compendious form the story of the Crimean War in which he had personally played a part; and Sir John William Kaye (1814–1876) left unfinished for Colonel Malleson the *History of the Sepoy War in India*. But the only other work in this department which may fitly be put in line with the great histories of Napier and Kinglake is G. F. R. Henderson's *Stonewall Jackson and the Civil War* (1898), an admirable biography and a masterly study of that part of the great American Civil War in which Jackson figured. Few biographies are more human, and probably no descriptions of campaigns are at once more satisfying to the professional reader and more clear to the layman. There has scarcely in recent years been a better example of a great theme treated greatly.

The writers who have been mentioned are only a few among the multitude of those who, during this prolific period, have laboured in the field of history. Many who are unnoticed have done solid and valuable work; some have thrown the results of their studies into good literary form; but the destiny probably of all is to be built into the fabric of the work of some great historian of the future. Here, almost as much as in the region of fiction, there is need for selection; for no clearer or more intelligent view of the historical literature of the period would be gained from the consideration of a larger number of the contributors to it.

This mass of historical literature is indubitably of very high average quality. No previous age has produced nearly so much historical work of genuine worth; only in this department of literature can we say with confidence that, on the whole, we surpass all our predecessors. At the same time, the assertion of superiority has been made far too absolutely, and the claim

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, Book IV. ch. iii.

to the possession of a radically different method cannot be sustained. What really distinguishes the work of recent years from that of the more distant past is the deeper sense of the historian's responsibility to his readers—that, and the far more complete command of the materials of history. It must be further remarked that the superiority of recent historical work would be far less clear were we to eliminate the names of such 'literary' historians as Carlyle, Macaulay and Froude. And the assertion of superiority must be further qualified as being general and not specific. Thucydides and Gibbon have not yet lost their pre-eminence. Bacon's *History of Henry VII* is still the best book on that reign. Knox's *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, steeped in prejudice as it is, is still incomparably the best account of the period with which it deals. In short, now as always, far more depends upon the man than upon the method. The right man will somehow forge a satisfactory method; and, as we have seen in the cases of Freeman and Stubbs, no method yet devised can bar the possibility of the most far-reaching mistakes.

§ 2. *The Biographers.*

The art of biography has a very close and obvious connexion with the art of history; but, though apparently the simpler of the two, it is nevertheless of later development. The father of history is older than the father of biography. Plutarch's *Lives* were a late production, and the class to which they belong is not well represented in classical literature. Neither are biographies at all common until a late period in English literature. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* were on a scale quite unusual at that time, and concerning many of the poets of whom he wrote he found no consecutive and systematic account. No mere man of letters had previously been dealt with so fully as Johnson himself was treated by Boswell. Our ignorance of the personal history of Shakespeare and his contemporaries is notorious; even the statesmen of those days are, with few exceptions, known, not as individual men but rather as figures in history. Charming lives and autobiographies

had appeared from time to time,—Roper's *Life of More*, the *Autobiography of Roger North*, the biographical works of Isaak Walton, *The Life of Col. Hutchinson*, and the lives of herself and her husband by Lamb's favourite, the Duchess of Newcastle. But the *business* of biography may be said to start with the nineteenth century, and a very large proportion of the masterpieces belong to it. More even than the development of history, and not less than the development of fiction, it has been characteristic of the time.

Some of the best of these biographies are noticed elsewhere. Carlyle's *Sterling* was the work of a man who was much more than a biographer, and Froude's *Carlyle* is most conveniently discussed along with the other works of its author. So also Mrs Gaskell's *Charlotte Brontë* is best taken in connexion with the works of the two great novelists, the author and her subject. Two very remarkable autobiographies, that of John Stuart Mill and Newman's *Apologia*, are inseparable from the other work of men who wrote a great deal more. Other biographies again, like Sir George Trevelyan's delightful *Life of Macaulay*, are excluded because the authors of them are still alive. But, after all exclusions, there remain at least one masterpiece and several works of high rank, besides a host of competent biographies and a library of memoirs and reminiscences, the bulk of which must be passed without notice.

The journals, memoirs and reminiscences of recent times will furnish ample raw material to the historian of a future generation; but there is no Pepys among the writers. As a rule, they have had in mind more or less clearly the thought of the press and the publisher; and self-consciousness destroys the charm of that sort of composition. Yet there is much that is readable as well as instructive in them. Political are apt to be better than literary reminiscences, for they have often solidity of substance if they have not grace of style. Perhaps the best of all are the *Greville Memoirs*, because the writer, Charles Greville, had exceptional opportunities for associating with the men who in his time made history, as well as a distinct gift for that sort of composition. In these memoirs there is nothing

more remarkable than the revolution in the writer's opinion of the Duke of Wellington, and no panegyric on the great soldier could be so convincing as the gradual change from coldness and suspicion to perfect trust and warm devotion. The *Conversations* of Nassau William Senior are another specimen of the raw material of history which may be noticed as also literature. They were the work of a man who had other claims to notice too, an economist and essayist of considerable power; but by far his best claim rests upon these remarkable and often fascinating conversations with great and interesting men. Of reminiscences and journals dealing more particularly with literary men and literary topics among the best are those of Caroline Fox; Fanny Kemble's are thinner, and reveal a less attractive character.

Among the regular biographies by far the highest place belongs to Lockhart's *Life of Scott* (1836–1838). Lockhart, about whose life and character something will be said in the chapter on criticism, had already essayed biography in his *Life of Burns* (1828), where a task, beset with pitfalls well described by Mr Andrew Lang, was accomplished with complete success. "The immense difficulty," says Mr Lang, "of writing on the great Scottish poet is, no doubt, best known to Scotchmen. To avoid mere fulsome rhetoric; to keep within due limits the patriotic Muse; to shun *engouement* and the Bacchic dithyramb on one side, and the temptation to moralise on the other; to beware of right-hand political bias, and of left-hand literary fastidiousness—these are only a few of the duties of the biographer of Burns. Taste, tact, tolerance in its best sense, sympathy national and personal, are all required. The slips and stumbles of writers on the darling of the Scottish people recur to the memory as one pens these lines. Of all Burns's biographers, Lockhart is he who 'divides us least[1].'" Though these words were written before the appearance of Henley's brilliant essay on Burns, it still remains true that "Lockhart is he who 'divides us least.'"

But admirable as is his *Life of Burns*, *The Life of Scott* is an incomparably greater performance. For the writing of it Lockhart possessed great advantages; but he had also formidable difficulties

[1] *Life of Lockhart*, ii. 26–27.

to overcome. Among the advantages must be set, first and chiefly, the character of Scott himself, the most largely human of all the figures in English literature since Shakespeare. All the materials Scott provided, in letters, in the admirable fragment of autobiography, in the wonderful *Journal*, since published *in extenso*, were of the rarest quality. He had relations with nearly every memorable man of his day. For years he was a kind of host in ordinary for all Scotland, and Abbotsford was the Mansion House of the nation. He was full of shrewd sense and grave wisdom, and at the same time he overflowed with anecdote and fun. The man who could do justice to him was bound to make a great biography; but to do justice to him required a man who had greatness in himself. It required also a man who, knowing Scott well and loving him, retained nevertheless his clearness of vision and sanity of judgment.

From 1818 onwards for fourteen years Lockhart knew Scott with an intimacy ever growing till it could grow no longer; and in 1820 his marriage with Sophia Scott made him a member of the family. He had the further advantage of knowing well the society in which Scott moved. He was by blood and birth Scotch, by adoption an Edinburgh man, by profession a lawyer. He, if any one, could understand what had gone to make the blood and bone of Scott. Above all, perhaps, Lockhart had the priceless gift of sympathy with his subject. He loved the man and honoured his memory (as Ben Jonson says with reference to Shakespeare) on this side idolatry as much as any. "Lockhart," says his biographer, "had been born to love Scott and, beyond even that regard which Scott's works awaken in every gentle heart, to make him by all men yet more beloved[1]."

Had Lockhart been a man of less faith or of inferior intellect these very advantages might have made him stumble. The man who almost idolises another can rarely keep his judgment clear where that other is concerned; a very intimate friend is often a partisan; and he who, from the standpoint of familiar intercourse, writes the life of one whom he feels to be greatly his superior runs some risk of impairing his own dignity. Froude

[1] *Life of Lockhart*, ii. 72.

quite needlessly made himself the champion of Mrs Carlyle against her husband. Macaulay's theory that Boswell wrote a very great biography because he himself was a very little man is ridiculous; and yet assuredly Boswell is not himself an impressive or dignified figure, nor does his *Life of Johnson* win for him that respect which so great a work ought to command. Of the partisanship of biographers the examples are so numerous that it would be superfluous to specify them.

The remarkable absence of these faults from *The Life of Scott* proves the soundness and sanity and penetration of Lockhart's judgment. Carlyle, a critic by no means too laudatory, praised the biography for its candour; and indeed that candour brought upon Lockhart the censure of those men of little faith who could not believe that Scott's genius and virtues would shine undimmed even if his weaknesses were told and his faults revealed. Nothing is more surprising than the clearness of vision with which Lockhart saw what those faults and weaknesses were, and their precise significance as elements in his character. Take, for example, his treatment of the strain of worldliness in Scott, and compare his judgment on this point with that of men who had far less temptation to go astray. Scott was, says Macaulay in declining Macvey Napier's invitation to review Lockhart's book, "perpetually sacrificing the perfection of his compositions, and the durability of his fame, to his eagerness for money; writing with the slovenly haste of Dryden, in order to satisfy wants which were not, like those of Dryden, caused by circumstances beyond his own control, but which were produced by his extravagant waste or rapacious speculation[1]." "He treats his mind," says Taine, "like a coal-mine, serviceable for quick working and for the greatest possible gain: a volume in a month, sometimes in a fortnight even, and this volume is worth one thousand pounds[2]."

Lockhart is infinitely wiser, more just, more faithful to the truth. He admits the fact that Scott laid an unbecoming stress upon worldly things, and among them wealth. But half a truth is often no truth at all; and Lockhart goes on to point out how

[1] *Life of Macaulay*, ii. 9.
[2] *History of English Literature*, iii. 435.

the whole training of Scott's mind, fancy and character had been such as to stimulate active external ambition; with what noble generosity his wealth had been used; how far from vulgar snobbery was his respect for rank. "His imagination had been constantly exercised in recalling and embellishing whatever features of the past it was possible to connect with any pleasing ideas, and a historical name was a charm that literally stirred his blood. But not so a mere title. He reverenced the Duke of Buccleuch—but it was not as a Duke, but as the head of his clan, the representative of the old knights of Branxholm. In the Duke of Hamilton he saw not the premier peer of Scotland, but the lineal heir of the heroic old Douglasses; and he had profounder respect for the chief of a Highland Clan, without any title whatever, and with an ill paid rental of two or three thousand a year, than for the haughtiest magnate in a blue ribbon, whose name did not call up any grand historical reminiscence[1]."

The difference between this and the preceding quotations is the difference between portraiture and caricature; a single feature, in the one case, taken and exaggerated till it obscures everything else, in the other case reduced to its proper proportions and set in its proper relation to the whole. The worldliness of Scott, as it was falsely conceived by Macaulay and Taine, was vulgar; as it is truly explained by Lockhart, we see how it is bound up with his whole imaginative life, how the fancy which re-created the life of Border moss-trooper and of Highland clansman, and which saw once more the pageant of the feudal knights, was only finding for itself another expression in the "romance in stone and lime" and in the lavish hospitality of Abbotsford.

Contemporaries blamed Lockhart, not only on the ground, which seems so strange to us, of malignity towards Scott, but on the score of indifference to the private feelings of others; and on this count of the indictment he was defended by the very man in the case of whose own biography, long afterwards, the loudest outcry of the century was raised. Carlyle points out that liability to this sort of pain is part of the penalty of associating with the

[1] *Life of Scott*, vi. 100.

great. "They that will crowd about bonfires may, sometimes very fairly, get their beards singed; it is the price they pay for such illumination; natural twilight is safe and free to all." The biographer's duty is to set down naught in malice, to leave unsaid much that, though true, is non-essential, but at all costs to tell the truth when it is essential. In Lockhart's book the test case is that of the Ballantynes. How indispensable to the understanding of Scott was the treatment of that strange chapter in his history every one must feel; how admirable are the etchings of the Ballantynes all readers of *The Life of Scott* know. The whole library of biography contains nothing more masterly than the passages in which Lockhart draws these portraits; and though, perhaps, they show a touch of malice, in substance justice appears to be done to the Ballantynes as well as to Scott.

Perhaps the subtlest test of the genius of a biographer is the manner in which he uses the common incidents and the familiar everyday relations of life to bring out character and to give reality to his picture; and few bear the test so well as Lockhart. His delineation of the ordinary routine of Abbotsford, the hunting and fishing expeditions, the joyous picnics, the stream of life flowing through the house, the personality of Scott as centre and soul of all, his friendliness with his humble neighbours and their grateful love of him, his position among them as 'the Shirra,' not the great man of letters, his animal pets—dogs, horses, even pigs and hens; in Edinburgh, his daily industry in the trivial round of Parliament House duties, his slow drives up the historic streets, every stone of which was fraught with meaning to him; all go towards the making of a figure which, but for Johnson, would be unique in our literary annals.

Through the whole book Lockhart's style is excellent. It is simple and unstrained, and wholly free from self-consciousness. There is no attempt at fine writing; the excellence consists in doing with complete success what is attempted, in expressing in the most translucent phrase the meaning intended to be conveyed. For this reason the reader seldom stops to notice how high is the quality of the English. If his attention be arrested at all, it is in those passages where the sorrow and tragedy rouse the biographer

to a restrained and sober eloquence. The concluding estimate of character is equally beautiful and just; and the death scene is one of the finest passages in the whole range of English prose.

The greatness of Lockhart comes out most vividly by contrast. Read in the arm-chair, *The Life of Scott* might seem to be a work within the compass of any man having access to the materials and the power to write good English. In point of fact, it is an achievement which has very rarely been rivalled. If only good material and literary capacity had been needed, Moore's *Byron* (1830) ought to have been great. The author was a practised and a skilful writer; Byron's letters are among the best in the English language; his life had been varied and adventurous to a degree hardly paralleled among literary men; his character, however it may be judged, is at any rate profoundly interesting. Carlyle, or Carlyle's biographer, would have made a book on him fascinating. But Moore was too petty for his subject, and he gives no distinct impression of that stormful personality. His *Byron* has a permanent interest inasmuch as it contains a great deal of information for which Moore was the first, as for some of it he remains the sole, authority. But wherever 'the real Lord Byron' may be, he is certainly not to be found in the pages of Moore. It is fair to add that Moore seems himself to have felt his insufficiency, and he only professes to add 'notices' of the life of Byron to his letters and journals.

It has sometimes been said that the lives of literary men are, as a rule, too uneventful to be suitable for more than a biographic sketch, that the men whose biographies can be profitably written on the large scale are men of action—soldiers, statesmen, travellers and adventurers. No judgment could be more mistaken. Nearly all the really great biographies are biographies of men of letters. Great soldiers and statesmen, like Frederick the Great and Napoleon and Marlborough and Pitt, are rather integral parts of history than individual men. Great explorers like Columbus and Cook are lost in the leagues they traverse or absorbed among the strange tribes whose existence they reveal. Personal details, which are the soul of biography, in their case seem paltry. Very often they have been too busy in action to leave the

materials. The literary man, on the contrary, is all his life long multiplying matter for the biographer. His formal works, his letters, the journals which he is more prone to keep than the man of action, all throw light upon his personality. His conversation too is far more illuminative than that of the soldier or even the statesman. Great talkers have nearly all been writers, not men of action. The statesman's lips are often sealed by considerations of policy; the soldier rarely possesses by nature, and still more rarely has cultivated, the art of expression. Action in the field or in the senate shows the inner life of the spirit; but it has to be translated, as it were, by the biographer into a different language. In the case of the man of letters the translation is already made. Hence to write well the life of a man of action is more difficult even than it is to write well the life of an author, and while there are at least a handful of the latter sort of true excellence, of the former kind there is hardly one. Even the fierce light which has been turned upon Napoleon has not revealed the *man* as a few men of letters have been revealed.

Except Carlyle's *Sterling* and Froude's *Carlyle*, there is no biography of the period which does not seem poor beside Lockhart's masterpiece; but among biographies least distant from *The Life of Scott* is Stanley's *Life of Arnold* (1844). It was Stanley's first work of importance, and it proved to be his best. He loved Arnold, and all his powers were on the strain to do justice to the great Head Master. He was accustomed to say that the work was by far the hardest he ever underwent. For two years it filled his whole mind and occupied all his time. And he had his reward. *The Life of Arnold* is the one book by Stanley that is likely to live. Perhaps its only conspicuous defect, and certainly its most obvious one, is the rigidity of plan which cuts the letters absolutely apart from the narrative, arranging them in blocks at the end of the several chapters. Such a plan is really a confession of failure. The book lacks unity, and the work of weaving the letters into the narrative, which ought to have been performed by the biographer, is left to the imagination of the reader.

The character of Arnold was a strong but not a complex one,

and therefore Stanley was not called upon to face the gravest difficulty of biography. There are no inconsistencies, such as those which perplex the biographer of "the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind"; nor even such as those which have just been touched upon in the case of Scott. There was nothing to conceal about Arnold, nothing which would greatly have tempted even an unwise biographer to concealment. The nearest approach to a problem of this kind was, perhaps, the position in the Church of a man holding Arnold's broad views. But for Stanley the problem was easy; he had no doubts on the subject; he did not see why Roman Catholics should not be members of the Church of England if it were only made legal; and he was naturally even less disposed to exclude extreme breadth of view. Neither was he called upon to follow Arnold into unfamiliar fields of thought and activity. Arnold's interests were scholastic, historical and ecclesiastical. At every point Stanley found himself on familiar ground. Further, the decision of Arnold's character served to strengthen Stanley. Arnold always knew his mind, and Stanley, following reverentially in his wake, learnt to know his too with exceptional clearness. What he did was to narrate a life and to depict a character of high, though not the highest, rank, and to do this with excellent taste and in English clear and forcible. He did it also with commendable condensation.

In his *Life of Goethe* (1855) George Henry Lewes undertook a far more difficult task than Stanley's, and on the whole achieved a wonderful success. Perhaps of all modern men Goethe is the one whose biography presents the greatest difficulties. No one else touches life at so many points, no one else is so toweringly superior to his fellows. In this task the versatility of Lewes stood him in good stead. He took great pains. He visited Weimar; he examined Goethe's library, finding in it the very copy of Taylor's *Historical Survey of German Poetry* which had been sent by Carlyle, with a bit of Carlyle's own handwriting on a piece of paper which marked the place; he saturated his mind with all that had been written by or about Goethe; and he listened to all the anecdotes and reminiscences he could find. He used his material judiciously. While the anecdotal element gives vividness

and interest, there is plenty of matter of solid worth to give weight to the book. The fact that for many years Lewes's life of the great German was regarded as an authority in Germany itself is the highest compliment that could be paid to the author. It has been to some extent superseded now. The laborious examination of masses of documents then inaccessible has disclosed many things that were not known to Lewes; but *The Life of Goethe* is nevertheless a book still worth reading.

Though none of the numerous biographies written by John Forster (1812–1876) is equal to those which have been mentioned, they nevertheless deserve notice, and their author was too conspicuous in the literary circles of his time to be passed over. Forster was by profession a barrister; but he never practised, and his interest lay rather in history and literature than in law. Towards these he made his way by the avenue of journalism. He contributed to or edited a number of periodicals—notably *The Examiner*, of which he was editor for about eight years. Mrs Carlyle refers to him as one "not unknown to fame as 'the second worst critic of the age[1],'" but at the same time indicates her own respect for his judgment; and the decision with which, on the score of *Paracelsus*, he named Browning at once with Shelley, Coleridge and Wordsworth, showed that as a critic he had both insight and courage. He was however simply a man of sound sense, of great industry and of solid attainments, not of brilliant talents, and still less of genius. Though he usually wrote vigorously, his style is at times bald; and though a conscientious student, he was not free from the vice of partisanship.

Forster is a conspicuous instance of the historical student who can do nothing except through the medium of biography: to him, the personal element was indispensable. This characteristic is clearly illustrated in the group of works which he devoted to the period of conflict between Charles I and the Parliament. He edited and partly wrote the *Lives of Eminent British Statesmen* (1837–1839), and afterwards expanded one of the biographies into an independent work, *Sir John Eliot, A Biography* (1864), which long took rank as one of the most important works on that period

[1] *Letters and Memorials*, i. 100.

of history. Gradually however he drifted into literary biography, probably because he discovered that, for a man with his interest in the individual, the richest material was to be found there. His *Life and Adventures* [afterwards *Life and Times*] *of Oliver Goldsmith* (1848) added greatly to men's knowledge of a very interesting character; and if his *Life of Swift* (1876) (never completed) did not contribute much original matter, it at least gathered together in a convenient way the results of previous investigations.

Forster's fame however, if it lasts at all, must last by reason of his *Life of Landor* (1869) and his *Life of Dickens* (1872–1874). Forster was known to most of the literary men of his day, and with the two who are the subjects of these biographies he was exceedingly intimate. Landor made him his literary executor, and he had sources of information as well as personal knowledge which must render his book permanently indispensable to the student of Landor. But just for this reason it brings out more strikingly than any of his previous publications the deficiencies of Forster as a biographer. Strongly marked as are the features of Landor's character, the impression left by the *Life* is not the impression of a man, but rather of a bundle of eccentricities; and yet it is plain that the biographer was animated by the most friendly spirit towards Landor. The truth seems to be that, notwithstanding Forster's interest in individuals, and although his first boyish venture in literature was of a dramatic character, he lacked just that touch of the dramatist's insight which is indispensable to biography of the highest class.

With respect to *The Life of Dickens* this criticism requires some modification, and yet it remains substantially true. More even than *The Life of Landor*, it will always remain the mine from which later students must perforce dig their material. The friendship between Dickens and Forster was unsurpassed in intimacy. It lasted through the greater part of their lives, and during its continuance there seems to have been absolutely nothing reserved by Dickens from his friend; the very beating of his heart was laid bare to Forster's eyes. There is something undignified and almost indecent on the part of Dickens in this unmeasured self-exposure; and though it gave Forster unparalleled advantages, in

one respect it put him in an apparently false position. Every reader of *The Life of Dickens* is struck with the extraordinary frequency with which the biographer himself is brought into the narrative, and contemporary criticism blamed him for egotism. The fault seems to have been in Dickens, not in Forster. The great novelist, self-reliant as he was towards the world, and well as he proved his capacity to fight his own battle, leant upon Forster like a little child; and the biographer could not, without falsifying the story, suppress the part he himself had played in shaping the life of Dickens.

With such perfect knowledge of the man and his motives, his affections and his aversions, Forster could scarcely fail to produce a likeness; and indeed Dickens is far more like a real man than anyone else about whom his friend has written. Yet Forster is not entirely successful. The materials are there from which the reader can reconstruct Dickens if he will; we have valuable and helpful views of phases and aspects of his character; but he does not stand out "in his habit as he lived." The touch which imparts life is wanting.

Forster was regarded as a sort of biographer-in-chief of his time; but his high reputation depended at least as much upon the quantity as upon the quality of his work. No one else made biography so much his business. David Masson (1822–1907) was a man of profounder learning, and his monumental *Life of Milton* (1859–1880) will long remain a treasure to students. His character and his great attainments shed honour for many a day upon Edinburgh University; but Masson was rather a man of learning than of marked literary gifts, and it is scholarship which gives *The Life of Milton* its high value.

In the case of Margaret Oliphant, a great talent for biography was obscured by indefatigable activity in another field of letters. She is chiefly thought of as a novelist, but she may be remembered by her *Life of Edward Irving* (1862), her *Memoirs of Laurence Oliphant and of Agnes, his Wife* (1891) and her *William Blackwood and his Sons* (1897), when her numerous novels have sunk into oblivion. Mrs Oliphant showed the gift for biography again and again in the magazine articles which

she wrote during her busy life. Wherever she had a character-sketch to do, it was well done. Even where her knowledge was far from profound a kind of instinct seemed to lead her to what would be not only effective but really illuminative. She did not possess the creative gift in the highest degree; probably no creature of her imagination will permanently keep a place in the gallery of fiction. But she had the power of appreciation and of understanding, and she had also a wide range of sympathy. Her *Edward Irving* satisfied even so exacting a critic as Irving's friend Carlyle. It is indeed a striking portrait, especially in the earlier part, when Irving was still sane and sensible; yet perhaps still greater ability was needed for the treatment of the later phase. Mrs Oliphant did not share Irving's beliefs, but she handled the worst of his extravagances with comprehension and with delicate sympathy. It may have been merely a coincidence, or possibly such problems had a fascination for her and attracted her to write about them, but at any rate, in her biography of Laurence Oliphant (who was very distantly related to her family), she had, in his extraordinary subjection to the Prophet Harris, the same sort of problem to deal with, and she treated it with the same sympathetic delicacy.

In *William Blackwood and his Sons* Mrs Oliphant had very different material to handle; and here too, in spite of some diffuseness and occasional repetitions, she was successful. The portrait of William Blackwood, the founder of the house, is vivid. He died in 1834, and of course the biographer did not know him; but she had evidently penetrated beneath the documents to the heart of the man. Nor is this the only good portrait in the book. Lockhart and Wilson, who, with Blackwood himself, made the magazine, are admirably drawn and admirably contrasted; and the slighter sketches too are nearly all well done.

This history of a publishing firm had been preceded, in 1891, by a similar history of the other publishing house in Britain which most closely rivalled that of Blackwood, in that its members were not merely traders in books, but in no unimportant sense producers of literature. Samuel Smiles's (1812–1904) *John Murray* has less of the charm of portraiture than Mrs Oliphant's *Blackwood*, but it

is more concentrated; and it too deserves honourable mention as a most valuable contribution to the literary history of the nineteenth century. The two works are a monument to the great change which passed over the financial and material conditions of literature in the eighteenth century, and which reached maturity in the nineteenth. Though "Barabbas was a publisher," the publisher has been only one degree less necessary to the author than the author has been to the publisher, and the grumblings of authors have just the same degree and kind of foundation as the grumblings of producer and consumer at the costly but indispensable middleman. It was fortunate for literature that among its middlemen were two men not only so sane and sensible, but so high-spirited and liberal, as John Murray and William Blackwood.

Smiles, like Forster, was a veteran in the biographer's craft. His long literary life was devoted mainly to biographical studies. The works by which he is best known, *Self-help* and *Thrift*, are biographic in principle. Though the ideals they inculcate are not, perhaps, the loftiest, they are wholesome books, they have a practical bearing upon the lives of the toiling multitudes to whom primarily they are addressed, and they have had a wide influence for good. They are among the phenomena which accompany the widening of the class of readers through the cheapening of books and the diffusion of a certain measure of education. The deepest interest of Smiles lay in the problems suggested by the organisation of modern industry, and the greater part of his biographical work—*Lives of the Engineers* (1877), *George Stephenson* (1857), *Industrial Biography* (1863), &c.—bore upon this. Artistically however his greatest successes were achieved in the delineation of humble characters who, amidst their daily toil for daily bread, contrived to keep alive an interest in nature and science. His *Life of a Scotch Naturalist* (1876) and his *Robert Dick, Baker, of Thurso, Geologist and Botanist* (1878) are delightful sketches, as genuinely didactic as any of his books, and all the better for being less obtrusively didactic.

CHAPTER II

LITERARY AND AESTHETIC CRITICISM

§ 1. *Literary Criticism.*

In most departments of literature the tendency is to depreciate the present and to look back to a golden age of great men in the past; but the critics as well as the historians of recent times have been exceptions to the rule. While they are not merely ready to acknowledge, but eager to proclaim on the house-tops, that the poets and the novelists of ancient days tower above their dwarfish successors, in respect of their own art of criticism they have had no doubt of their own superiority to their predecessors. In text-books on literature we are constantly reminded of Jeffrey's "This will never do," and of the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood* articles which were long supposed to have 'snuffed out' Keats; and there is a clear implication, if not an explicit claim, that such wild aberrations of critical judgment would be impossible in these more enlightened days. But, unless they are balanced with something else, such quotations and references give a one-sided and essentially false view of criticism in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. Southey—a critic as well as a poet—met Jeffrey with the retort, "*He* crush *The Excursion*! Tell him he might as well fancy he could crush Skiddaw"; and while *The Edinburgh* and *The Quarterly* and *Blackwood* were vainly attempting to crush Skiddaw, Lamb and Coleridge and Hazlitt were doing critical work of a quality which has rarely been surpassed. If therefore there was much unsatisfactory criticism, there was also some of the very best.

Neither is it safe to assume that errors as gross as those which were made about Keats and Wordsworth have ever been, or are now, impossible. *Sartor Resartus* was as little to the taste of the new generation as *The Excursion* was to Jeffrey's; Tennyson at first received either censure or lukewarm praise; Arnold was neglected; and one of the grossest attacks ever made was directed against Rossetti. It is at least possible that similar blunders and oversights are being made now.

The critics who ruled the reviews and magazines in the early days of the nineteenth century were men of great ability and of wide reading; and the secret of their errors, monstrous and almost grotesque as they appear now, must be sought rather in the prepossessions with which they approached their subject than in their own deficiencies. It should be remembered that even Byron, though he was both a victim of the reviewers and one of the greatest of the new school of poets, was essentially in agreement with the more conservative critics. The Bowles-Pope controversy is symptomatic. In criticism, as in theology, in philosophy, in poetry, there existed side by side two opposite 'schools,' if we may thus call them. It would be more accurate to say that two contrasted types and tendencies of mind and character were illustrated. The division of 'romantic' and 'classic' is permanent and world-wide: as it showed itself at the opening of the last century, it is only a particular illustration of a divergence which never ends and which is always beginning anew. The revolution which is supposed to have taken place in literary criticism consists in the triumph of 'romantic' principles; but the triumph does not mean the complete disappearance, still less the permanent extinction, of the opposed 'classical' principles. Neither is it true that all critical merit belongs to the former set, or that nothing but error is to be found in the latter. Jeffrey and Gifford were simply critics who were thoroughly contented with the standards and the ideals of the past, and who were convinced beforehand that what was new must be wrong in so far as it did not conform to those ideals. The opposition between creative art and criticism is made to appear peculiarly sharp because the great and influential periodicals, *The Edinburgh*, *The Quarterly*

and *Blackwood*, were under the control of such men as these. It is easy to forget Hunt's *Examiner*, *Indicator* and *Liberal*, and even the admirable *London Magazine*; for their influence was far less wide.

Periodical literature was at that time practically a new development. Newspapers and other periodicals were still few in number. *The Gentleman's Magazine* and *The Monthly Review* had already run a long course. *The Times* existed; but it was infantile in proportions and limited in scope, compared with the great journal of the present day. When, in 1802, the famous four, Francis Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, Henry Brougham and Francis Horner, along with some others less known, met in Edinburgh and determined to found a critical periodical, they were conscious that they were taking a new departure. Nothing which then existed filled the place they proposed to occupy. There was also about their meeting something of the spirit of conspiracy. It would be a good joke—so it evidently struck them—to air their wit at the expense of their elder and more solemn neighbours. Anonymity was the cloak of darkness under which they walked; and it tempted them to poke fun and satire when, perhaps, writing openly under their own names, they would have hesitated to do so. The editorial 'we' fostered also a tone of Olympian superiority. The individual contributor might have shrunk from pronouncing sentence like a judge upon a criminal in the dock; but 'we,' *The Edinburgh Review*, were above ordinary humanity. The shock must have been rude when, as occasionally happened, 'we' caught a Tartar, and were repaid in the coin of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

The Edinburgh Review soon became a more important periodical than its founders dreamed of at its inception. It grew to be a force in the country; power developed the sense of responsibility; the position of the editor became a great one, and his business was serious. The veil of anonymity soon wore thin; but its silent influence endured; and when the success of this first venture led to imitation, the same history was repeated in the case of other periodicals.

At the start, *The Edinburgh Review* did not profess to be

the organ of one political party only; but its founders were, in point of fact, Whigs; Toryism had no chance of fair representation in its columns; and Tories like Scott were soon driven to withdraw support from a publication which encouraged principles in their view prejudicial to the country. This feeling led in 1808 to the founding of *The Quarterly Review*, which was designed to do for Toryism what *The Edinburgh* was doing for Whig principles. Under Murray, its publisher, and Gifford, its editor from 1809, *The Quarterly* proved that there was room for a second publication of the kind. A few years later another group of Edinburgh men became convinced that there was room even for a third, and the result was the appearance of the celebrated *Blackwood's Magazine* (1817). It occupied ground rather different from that taken by the great quarterlies. It was published more frequently, took a lighter tone and gave itself more to jest and revelry. Moreover, though *Blackwood* has furnished at least as many examples as either *The Edinburgh* or *The Quarterly* of the false style of criticism supposed to have been characteristic of the early part of the nineteenth century, it was really far more imbued than they were with the romantic spirit, and far less a consistent exponent of eighteenth century principles.

So different in spirit was *The Retrospective Review* (1820) that Professor Saintsbury declares of it that "good taste, good manners, good temper and good learning abound throughout." Apparently they were not popular, for it only lived eight years (1820–1828). Magazines serious and heavy, like *The Westminster Review* (1824), or light and witty, like *Fraser's Magazine* (1830); and weekly papers, like *The Spectator* (1828) and *The Athenæum* (1827), appeared one after another. The removal of fiscal burdens upon journals greatly stimulated the development of the newspaper. The age of periodical literature had come. From the first it has exercised a profound influence upon miscellaneous prose of all kinds. Essays of every sort—criticisms, sketches of character, descriptions of scenery, short stories—have found their natural refuge in the columns of magazines. For a time, works of greater length were invariably published apart; but long ago the novel came within the sphere of the magazine, and there

have been occasional examples of the publication in serial form of long works not fictitious. Lyrical verse has also been cherished by the periodical press. It is certain that the development of the periodical has enormously increased the volume of writing. A less dubious advantage is that it has also raised the average quality. Setting works of genius aside, it is clear that the journey-work of literature is, on the whole, more competently done now than it was a century or two ago. But further, the magazines seem to have been the means of calling into being some work which has undoubtedly the stamp of genius. But for *The London Magazine* we might never have had Charles Lamb's exquisite essays or Miss Mitford's delightful sketches. It was the encouragement of *The Witness* which led Dr John Brown to write the beautiful papers of *Horae Subsecivae*; and if Thackeray had not edited *The Cornhill Magazine* he would probably never have written the *Roundabout Papers*. Macaulay, Carlyle, Froude, Lockhart, Wilson and Hazlitt were all in various ways and degrees indebted to the periodicals of their time. On the other side of the account must be set a tendency to haste and half-work and a temptation to crop the soil too frequently. The "leisure to grow wise" is among the things our latter days lack, and the writer must be singularly resolute who can take time to do his best when the printer's devil is waiting at the door for 'copy.'

What we have specially to consider at present is the influence which this growth of the periodical exercised upon criticism. One point which must strike the observer of the history of periodicals is the almost inevitable absence in the critic of that "disinterestedness" which Matthew Arnold pronounced to be the one rule of criticism. The various periodicals, as he pointed out, spoke each for a party, not for the truth. *The Edinburgh* was Whig, *The Quarterly* and *Blackwood* were Tory, *The Westminster* was the organ of the philosophical Radicals. Literary criticism was supposed to stand apart, and in many cases, no doubt, it did so. But by no means always. Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? How shall a benighted Tory produce that which is acceptable to the Whig reviewer? The orthodox Tory was as sure that there must be something unwholesome in

a Whig book as he was that an adder secreted poison. It was the business of the writers of one party to warn its members against the insidious approaches of the other. The politics of Leigh Hunt had something to do with the virulence of the attack upon "the Cockney school." In Macaulay's eyes the vices of Croker's *Boswell* and of Southey's *Colloquies on Society* were all the more flagrant because the authors were Tories. Religion gave a bias sometimes more powerful than even that of politics. It was more difficult to pardon Byron the heterodoxy of *Cain* than the morals of *Don Juan*; and Scott incurred blame for accepting the dedication of the former work. The Utilitarians were at least as much dreaded, disliked and vilified for their heresies as for their radicalism. The obscure but appalling charge of 'Germanism' was enough to blight a man's career. Obviously, all this militates against disinterestedness, and tends to modify the critical judgment by "regards that stand aloof from the entire point." The point of view is not that of pure art; the question asked is not, Is this beautiful? but, Is it safe? does it harmonise with 'correct' opinions?

Two objections (though they are not always clearly distinguished) are commonly taken against what is supposed to be the typical criticism of the early years of the nineteenth century. In the first place, these criticisms are not consonant with modern taste, and in the second place, they are rude in manner.

With respect to taste, the fault of the critics was, as has been already indicated, that they were too conservative. Living at a time when a great revolution in literature was taking place, they failed to appreciate the merits of the innovators, and this not merely when the persons who exhibited those merits were indifferent or distasteful to the critics. Even from the organ of his own party, though it relied not a little on his strength, Scott himself sometimes received scanty justice. The case was analogous to the battle of the metres in the beginning of the Elizabethan period. The classicists thought the hexameter the model of all verse for all time, and Spenser a barbarian because, in preference to it, he evolved for his great poem the stanza which is indissolubly associated with his name. Just in the same way, to

Jeffrey and Gifford, Pope had pronounced the last word, and no progress seemed possible beyond the *Essay on Man* and *The Dunciad* and the *Satires and Epistles*. Just in the same way, to the end of time there will be some who will champion the old and fight with all their strength against the new.

The charge of hectoring roughness, amounting even to virulence and brutality, stands on a different footing; and in this respect certainly there has been great improvement. The tone and temper of many of the criticisms of those days cannot be defended; but they may be explained. Anonymity, as has been indicated already, is part of the explanation. Critical journalism was a new thing; its etiquette was unformed, its moral code undetermined. Many things which no gentleman would do now were then done by men who were undoubtedly gentlemen. The critics stood in a perilous position. Experience has shown again and again that when men are freed from the check of public opinion they are apt to overstep the limits they keep so long as they are subject to it. In such a position of dangerous freedom the anonymous critics stood; and that professional etiquette of journalism, which has since taken the place of public opinion, had not developed. This inherent tendency of anonymous writing was strengthened by the youth of some of the writers. But the importance of this consideration has frequently been exaggerated. Sydney Smith was thirty-one and Jeffrey twenty-nine at the birth of *The Edinburgh Review*; and though Horner was only twenty-four, no one ever charged Horner with the sins of youth. There is more force in this plea when it is urged for *Blackwood*. In 1817 Lockhart was only twenty-three; and though Wilson was thirty-two, he was one of those men who never cease to be boys. Youths pronouncing judgment upon their elders, masquers jeering and gibing behind their dominoes,—it is little wonder that for a while they ran riot, or that it took years of time, actions and threats of action, duels or threats of duels, to bring home to them the full meaning of their words and to develop a sense of responsibility. The faults in question were confined to no single school or set or party. There is no critical aberration worse than that of *The Edinburgh Review*

article on *Christabel* and the poems published along with it, which Coleridge attributed to Hazlitt; yet, notwithstanding this experience, Coleridge himself could be as virulently abusive as any writer in *Blackwood*.

The lessons of the early *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Review* critics are more by way of warning than of example to us, while the critics of the other school are still rich in positive instruction. The difference is sometimes said to be that, whereas the critics of the traditional school relied upon fixed rules and believed in permanent and unalterable canons, those of the romantic school denied the existence of any such canons. This difference is real, but it may easily be misinterpreted. The critics of the new, no more than those of the old, school denied the existence and the necessity of law in criticism; but the two conceptions of law were distinguished as the static from the dynamic, or the mechanical from the organic. It is true, Lamb was almost purely intuitive in his criticisms; and though he worked upon principles, he would have been puzzled to explain them. But Coleridge, as sensitive in intuition as Lamb, consciously followed the lines of German philosophical criticism, and imported into England the principles of Lessing and Schlegel. It was the introduction into literary criticism of that which we know in philosophy as Transcendentalism, in religion as Mysticism, in poetry as Romanticism. Only thus could the new literature be intelligently criticised. The absurd mistakes of the old school were due to the fact that their standards were utterly incongruous with that to which they were applied. It was like measuring some volatile essence by a foot-rule and a compass and square.

Most of the men who have been named belong to the Revolutionary period rather than to the Victorian era. Gifford died in 1826, Hazlitt and Coleridge and Lamb within the decade following. Jeffrey resigned the editorship of *The Edinburgh Review* in 1829. The *Blackwood* group were intermediate, and lived well into the later period. Their history, and that of the great magazine with which their names are associated, must have a place, not inconspicuous, in any account of the literature which was growing up when the period of the Revolution was on the wane.

The history of *Blackwood's Magazine* brings to mind, even more forcibly than the story of the origin of *The Edinburgh Review*, the fact that, in the early part of the nineteenth century, London was not what it has since become, practically the sole centre of literature. The mere fact that *The Edinburgh Review* was first established in the city from which it takes its name is itself of little importance; and though the *Review* for many years took a tone from the place of its birth, it was never redolent of Edinburgh, and it soon became rather the Whig review than the Edinburgh review. But one of the noteworthy features of *Blackwood's Magazine* is that for many years it was emphatically the Edinburgh magazine. It was mainly written by Edinburgh men, and in no small measure it was written primarily for an audience of that city. That article in the opening number, the celebrated *Chaldee Manuscript*, which caused probably greater commotion than any other magazine article has ever produced, was wholly topical in its character; and though the *Noctes Ambrosianae* treat of all things in heaven and earth and in the waters under the earth, no small part of these papers too relates specially to Edinburgh, its citizens, its neighbours and its surroundings.

The prominence in literature of the northern capital was rendered possible only by the high talent, amounting in some cases to genius, of a group of the inhabitants. They had behind them a century of literary tradition. Allan Ramsay and the hapless Fergusson made Edinburgh the home of Scottish vernacular literature until the richer and robuster genius of Burns came upon the scene. Hume, Robertson and Adam Smith gave the city a European fame. Dugald Stewart carried on into the nineteenth century the spirit of Scottish philosophy. The genius of Scott drew out the younger writers as plants are drawn by the light and warmth of the sun; and the fact that, of the three most enterprising and far-sighted publishers of the time, two had their residence in Edinburgh, was not without importance; for it ensured a ready market for the productions of the clever young men who walked the Parliament House unburdened with briefs. Those publishers were Constable, memorable for his connexion with the great Waverley series, and William Blackwood, the

founder of the great publishing house which bears his name. The famous magazine was the outcome of his enterprise. It succeeded another periodical of his, *The Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*, which ran a brief and not a bright career under two editors, Pringle and Cleghorn, who were ridiculed by their high-spirited successors in the *Chaldee Manuscript*.

This celebrated *jeu d'esprit* struck the key-note of the new periodical. It was daringly personal, sparing neither eminence nor insignificance. A wild uproar followed upon its appearance; and even now references to it are sometimes made with bated breath, as if it were a thing too terrible for the pages of any respectable periodical. Not even its authors in after years defended its wisdom; but it is an extremely clever and amusing production and, though utterly reckless, is essentially innocent and free from malevolence. As it is still, when many of the allusions require a commentary to explain them, a source of mirth to the reader, we can understand how irresistible it must have been when every touch had its instant effect. It was the work of Lockhart and Wilson. Others—Hogg, and even the philosopher Hamilton—are said to have had a hand; but Lockhart's specific statement leaves no doubt that to the two first-named belong practically all the honour and all the responsibility. It is they in particular whom *Blackwood's Magazine* brings upon the stage as authors and critics.

The elder of the pair, John Wilson (1785–1854), was already an author and a poet. The son of a Paisley manufacturer of considerable wealth, he had gone to Magdalen College, Oxford, as a gentleman-commoner, had won there an extraordinary reputation for talent and a reputation higher still for his wonderful athletic powers, and had afterwards in 1807 settled at Elleray on Windermere, where he became intimate with the Lake poets; of which so-called 'school' Wilson used to be ranked as a member. His first volume was the rather commonplace *Isle of Palms* (1812), which was followed by the stronger and richer *City of the Plague* (1816). In the interval Wilson had lost his money, and the disaster forced him to take steps to make his own living. He moved to Edinburgh and was called to the bar; but he never

practised, and he is said to have regarded with consternation a solitary brief which somehow came to him: he did not know what to do with it. He was therefore ready and willing, like Lockhart, to be enlisted in the service of Blackwood's new periodical. He was long supposed to have been the editor of it; but in its early days 'Maga' could scarcely be said to have an editor. It was the product mainly of the pens and the advice of Wilson and Lockhart, with Blackwood himself in the background as the final authority on everything, when he chose to assert himself.

Except with regard to the *Chaldee Manuscript*, Wilson had perhaps a smaller share than Lockhart in the early indiscretions of 'Maga' and a larger part in what—on the critical side—can be put to her credit. It was Lockhart who wrote the objectionable articles on *The Cockney School of Poetry*; and it was Wilson who honoured himself and the magazine alike by probably the very first really enthusiastic and adequate criticism of Wordsworth. Strangely enough, in after years, in the *Noctes*, he said that Wordsworth often wrote "like an idiot," that he was "a good man and a bad poet," and that *The Excursion* was "the worst poem of any character in the language." He is responsible too for an article on Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, which was one of the early sins of *Blackwood*. But on the whole there was less of the "scorpion" in Wilson than in Lockhart. A large geniality characterised his mind as well as his body. Though he sometimes used the bludgeon, he was at least as apt to praise extravagantly as to deal out unmeasured blame; and both his native disposition and his former residence in the Lake district inclined him to look with favour on the writers who were the special butts of *The Edinburgh* and *The Quarterly*. It was the inconsistency due to the want of "the central *tie-beam*" which sometimes led him to unsay what he had formerly said well.

The close connexion which Wilson formed with *Blackwood* was the most important fact in his literary life, and a very large portion of the twelve volumes of his collected writings consists of reprints from the magazine. Its appearance served as a recurring and much-needed stimulus to his genius. He was highly erratic. One day he would work with intense energy and with extraordinary

speed, and the next day he would be absolutely idle. Occasionally he would sit with pen in hand diligently wooing a deaf muse; but this was probably an experience which only came when the month had been wasted and *Blackwood* was on the point of publication. Such a disposition was not favourable to the production of sustained works, and there is reason to believe that the periodical drew from Wilson the best that was in him. Especially happy, for him and also for *Blackwood*, was the design of the celebrated *Noctes Ambrosianae*, the only work by Wilson which has still a certain vitality. It is not clear whose was the original idea of the *Noctes*: certainly the papers were not at first exclusively Wilson's: Lockhart, Maginn and others had fingers in the pie. But as time went on the *Noctes* became more and more identified with Wilson, until in the end they became not only his almost alone, but his own personality threatened to be absorbed in that of the fictitious Christopher North.

The felicity of plan of the *Noctes* might, in Hibernian fashion, be said to consist in the want of plan. They were an *olla podrida* of prose and verse, criticism, description, sport, Bacchic revelry, into which all that was best and much of what was commonplace in the writer's mind might be poured. Few books that have lived so long are so extraordinarily uneven. As we read them in Ferrier's reprint, the wit seems often forced and the eloquence rings false. Yet, on the other hand, there are passages of rare beauty, numerous evidences of large-hearted generosity, a buoyancy of spirit and a flowing abundance of power, which are singularly attractive; and there is one marvellous character, the Ettrick shepherd, which is hardly over-praised by Ferrier as "one of the finest and most finished creations which dramatic genius ever called into existence." The *Noctes* as a whole give a perfectly accurate picture of Wilson's mind, with its mixture of fine gold and miry clay. It is vain to wish that he had winnowed the chaff from his wheat, or had burnt away the dross from the gold. The mixture was in his very nature, and the precious could not have been isolated from the worthless without invading the seat of life itself.

In his other works Wilson shows similar qualities. As a rule,

his touch is unmistakable: it would have been impossible long to conceal from those who knew him his connexion with *Blackwood*; and, except at the very start, no serious attempt was made to do so. *The Recreations of Christopher North* (1842) is similar in spirit to the *Noctes*. In *The Trials of Margaret Lindsay* (1823) and *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life* (1822), he never rises so high as he does in the *Noctes*: it is probably true also that he never sinks so low. They are much weaker than might have been expected from a man of his abounding vigour, and they are not free from a taint of sentimentality.

In his criticism Wilson cannot be said to belong exclusively to either the old school or the new. He was torn asunder between the native tendency of his mind and his recollections of the Lakes on the one hand, and his *Blackwood* connexion on the other. He had no real principles in criticism. He was prone to take colour from his surroundings, and to content himself with expressing the mood which happened to be dominant at the moment of writing; and so his oracles are often—as in his criticism of Wordsworth—contradictory, his taste is unsure, his praise and censure are alike indiscriminate. He lauded extravagantly that dull poem, Pollok's *Course of Time*, and he made Tennyson wince by a review of the *Poems* of 1832. Alike when Wilson was wrong and when he was right, it seems to be by chance; and if he was more frequently right than wrong, it was because his nature was healthy, not because he could render a reason. His criticism is an unweeded garden. It would not be true to say that "things rank and gross in nature possess it merely"; but things rank and gross are there, as well as flowers, sometimes delicately beautiful, often a little flaunting, but beautiful still.

Wilson's companion figure in *Blackwood*, John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854), fills a larger space in literature, not on account of his criticism, but because of his biographical work. Seldom have a pair of comrades and coadjutors been more obviously complementary to one another, for they contrasted in almost every respect, physical, intellectual and moral. Lockhart was spare and dark, Wilson fair, florid and large of limb. Lockhart was evidently the product of an old civilisation, Wilson reminded more than one

observer of the first man Adam, because he had so much of the freshness of nature about him. Lockhart was reticent to a fault, Wilson a little apt to wear his heart upon his sleeve. Lockhart was severe and restrained even in passages of the highest eloquence written through a mist of tears, Wilson always rhetorical—sometimes grandly, sometimes faultily so.

Lockhart was the son of a Lanarkshire minister of good old family but of small means. From Glasgow University he went as a Snell exhibitioner to Balliol College, Oxford; and he had just been called to the bar in Edinburgh when the famous *Magazine* was started. He was an excellent scholar, both in classics and in modern languages. His spirited translation of the *Spanish Ballads* (1823) proves his acquaintance with a literature not commonly studied in England; and he was one of the very few who at that time knew and appreciated German literature. This accomplishment helped to establish the memorable friendship between Scott and Lockhart. The latter had visited Germany, and there had met Goethe. Scott was interested, invited Lockhart to Abbotsford, and so laid the foundation of a friendship which has already been touched upon. Lockhart's marriage in 1820 drew him into another circle, and somewhat loosened his connexion with *Blackwood*. His acceptance in 1825 of the editorship of *The Quarterly Review*, causing his removal to London and filling his hands with other work, necessarily cut him off still more from his old companions, though he continued to contribute occasional articles, or fragments for the *Noctes*. He remained editor of *The Quarterly* for twenty-eight years, and resigned the office only a few months before his death, weary, melancholy, solitary, having lived to see not only Scott himself, but all Scott's children and all but one of his own, as well as Blackwood and Wilson, laid in their graves.

Lockhart's literary work was multifarious. He is great as a biographer and more than respectable as a novelist, while the *Spanish Ballads* give him a creditable place as a translator gifted with true poetic feeling; and, besides all this, he was by profession a critic and the author of innumerable magazine and review articles. It is not however in his criticism that Lockhart is seen

at his best. He was so much younger than Wilson at the start of *Blackwood* that he was, in that respect, more excusable for the indiscretions then committed. But although in later years he avoided the extremes of his youth, he could never be absolutely trusted to keep within the limits of good taste in his criticisms; and he never learnt, what Matthew Arnold knew and illustrated so well, the power of perfect urbanity and politeness. And yet, though he is, in much of his critical work, indefensible, more sins are laid to his charge than he ever committed. He was guiltless, as we have seen, of the *Blackwood* article on *Biographia Literaria*; and it was Miss Rigby, not he, who many years later wrote the offensive article in *The Quarterly* on *Jane Eyre*. In the latter case, of course, Lockhart was responsible as editor for its appearance. The review of Tennyson's early poems, though excessively severe, is not altogether indefensible. Anything that was suggestive of Keats seems in his youth to have irritated him[1], and, as a rule, he was not attracted by new poets, especially if they followed new paths. Yet under his editorship, if not in articles from his pen, quite a considerable number of poets are treated with praise and appreciation fully equal to their deserts. Among them may be mentioned Fanny Kemble, Hartley Coleridge, Henry Taylor, John Sterling, Aubrey de Vere, Elizabeth Barrett, Mrs Norton, and a whole group of other poetesses. The articles on Taylor and on Fanny Kemble at least were by Lockhart himself[2].

The truth however is that literary criticism was not Lockhart's *métier*; and it was an unkind fate which, in the connexion first with *Blackwood* and afterwards with *The Quarterly*, made it his daily occupation. Still more unfortunate for him was the spirit of the time which allowed and even encouraged him to cultivate that stinging style to which he owed his sobriquet of "the scorpion." On the other hand, all this is more than balanced by the singular good fortune which made him the biographer of Scott, of whom Lockhart declared that his peers could only be found "in the roll of great sovereigns and great captains, rather than in that

[1] Lockhart, however, lived to repent.

[2] Lang's *Life of Lockhart*, ii. 255, 402.

of literary genius[1]." Such a man appealed to Lockhart. It was the many-sidedness of Scott which gave the biographer the scope for his brilliant success. In dealing with him, Lockhart is at his best as a critic also; his remarks on the successive Waverleys are always sound and good; and often excellent. The same is true of the criticisms interspersed through his biography of Burns. It may be conjectured that in his case sympathy with, and comprehension of, the character was a condition of, or at least a great aid to, sound criticism.

There is neither space nor necessity to follow the development of the periodicals which devoted themselves to literature. The most important have been already named. But there remains one journal which, though not primarily critical of literature, deserves special mention because it is unique. The foundation of *Punch* (1841) is a fact no less worthy to be chronicled than is the foundation of *The Edinburgh Review*. For the remaining sixty years of the century it was, as it still is, a power in the literature, as well as in the social life, of the country. We involuntarily think of this power as personified: Punch speaks of himself as an individual, a man; and it is as an individual that the world thinks of him. Probably more than any other periodical, Mr Punch has impressed his own personality on his staff. The great writers and artists who have made him what he was, and is, have certainly not lost their own individuality; and yet as his servants they have become in some subtle way—Mr Punch. To their honour and to his, the immense power of this remarkable personage has been rarely used, in serious matters, without a sense of responsibility. He has generally been right, and when he has erred he has been upright in purpose. He has always been much more than a jester; an undertone of seriousness pervades him; but it does not make him less witty or more dull. Quite the contrary: it is just this seriousness which has set *Punch* on his pinnacle, unapproachable by any other comic journal. He is the critical observer of life, never uninterested; no partisan, yet never indifferent to the question of right or wrong. Upon any grave occurrence he has always been ready to take off the jester's mask and to speak in weighty, or even

[1] Lang's *Life of Lockhart*, i. 305.

in solemn, tones; and more than once or twice, when the heart of the nation has been deeply moved, his has been the voice that has best expressed the general emotion. He mourned in noble verse the deaths of Havelock and of Lincoln and the fate of Franklin. He made a parody on *The Isles of Greece* the vehicle of doubt as to the nobility of a conception of life whose highest ideal was to buy where goods were cheap and to sell where goods were high; and, like Tennyson and Ruskin, he clearly was of opinion that, in some circumstances, war might be morally preferable to peace. The same seriousness is indicated by Thackeray's resignation of his position on the staff of *Punch* on a political question. It is visible in the same writer's *Book of Snobs*, and in innumerable cartoons from Leech to Tenniel, and from Tenniel to the present day. Similarly, though his primary business has not been literary criticism, Punch has always shown his interest in literature, and has always, from the days of Thackeray's parodies, which are indirect criticisms, down to the admirable papers of the Baron de Bookworms, done all within his power to humanise, to elevate and to ennoble it.

The new periodicals unquestionably provided a medium for English criticism far more convenient than any that had previously existed; but the nature and quality of criticism depend upon men, not upon mechanism. And the facts do not support the belief in such a vast improvement as is sometimes vaguely supposed to have taken place. The school of eighteenth century criticism died away; but the leaders of the romantic school passed away too. The world was free for the younger men to bustle in; but who were they whose activity was to transform it? The death of Gifford and the retirement of Jeffrey may have been a relief; but critics capable of taking the place of men like Coleridge and Lamb and Hazlitt are not easily to be found in any age. Carlyle, whose critical work has been dealt with elsewhere, was the only man then writing whose power was comparable to that of the men of the expiring generation. Ruskin enters upon the stage in 1843 with the first volume of *Modern Painters*; Arnold first appears as a critic in the introduction to the *Poems* of 1853. These are the men who fill the gap left by the great of the

preceding generation; and as Carlyle soon turned aside from literary criticism and Ruskin's criticism is mainly incidental, while Arnold's work is mostly of far later date, the generation after 1830 is really not strong in criticism. Insensibility almost as gross as Jeffrey's in the case of Wordsworth was shown in the treatment of Arnold; impertinence as offensive as that of *The Cockney School of Poetry* in the criticism of Charlotte Brontë; but we look in vain for anything comparable to the penetrating insight of Coleridge or of Lamb. Much of the best critical work that continued to be done came from the pens of two survivors of their generation, Leigh Hunt and De Quincey.

Although De Quincey wrote copiously for *The Quarterly Review* as well as for *Blackwood*, both these men belong to the critical school opposed to that which is usually associated with these journals. De Quincey was for a time a dweller among the Lakes, and was one of the earliest to appreciate the genius of Wordsworth; and Leigh Hunt did more than anyone else during the poets' lives for the fame of Shelley and Keats. Fate has dealt unequally with them. De Quincey's works were collected, and his reputation in literature is above rather than below his deserts; but no complete edition of Hunt's works exists, and much of his prose is buried in half-forgotten journals. Yet few men during the first half of the nineteenth century laboured more assiduously for literature, or on the whole more successfully, than James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784–1859), whose most attractive *Autobiography* (1850) ought to keep his memory fresh, even if all the rest that he has written be forgotten. The record of Hunt's journalistic adventures is amazing. He edited *The Examiner*, *The Reflector*, *The Indicator*, *The Liberal*, *The Companion*, *The Tatler*, *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* and *The Monthly Repository*. Most of them had a very short life, and, of course, a great deal of the editor's work was meant merely for the moment and has perished with the day; but the fertility of mind which he displayed, especially in writing, practically single-handed, *The Tatler*, a daily paper of four pages, is astonishing. By far the most valuable of this journalistic work was, however, done for *The Examiner*, which was started jointly by himself and his brother John in 1808.

It was meant to be, and at the start really was, independent of party though liberal in sympathy. It took a motto from Swift: "Party is the madness of many for the gain of a few." As time went on the attractions of party proved irresistible; but at no time did it deserve the repute which it acquired for republicanism, 'Bonapartism' and other evil 'isms.' In literature it really was more fair and tolerant than the other journals of the time, and few, if any, of the contemporary editors and writers of them showed such intellectual detachment, and such disinterested love of beauty for its own sake, as Hunt displayed.

Hunt as a critic is most easily judged in the present day by the books which he published in his later years—*Imagination and Fancy* (1844), *Wit and Humour* (1846) and *Men, Women, and Books* (1847),—the last consisting of articles reprinted from *The Edinburgh* and *Westminster Reviews*, *Ainsworth's Magazine* and other periodicals. But justice can never be done to him unless it be remembered that much of his most original work is buried in the journals which he himself edited; for it was there, in his own youth, that he welcomed the young poets whom the world seemed to have conspired to ignore. In days when *The Edinburgh Review* could declare concerning the volume which gave to the world Coleridge's *Christabel* and other poems, that it contained only one couplet which could be reckoned poetry or even sense, and when *Blackwood* could still pour insult upon the names of Keats and Shelley, Hunt was already enchanted with the magical beauty of the cadences and suggestions of "Down to a sunless sea" and "Ancestral voices prophesying war." The "fairy casements" were open to him almost as soon as to the poets themselves. He could not create such things (though as a poet he was more than respectable), but his heart and soul were ready to respond to every suggestion of romance, and his ear was keen for every melody.

Hunt was a critic because he was a poet; but he is greatest in the former capacity. *The Story of Rimini* (1816) proves that he could tell a tale in verse gracefully, and *Abou Ben Adhem* is a beautiful little piece; yet their author was only a minor poet. Still, he was poet enough to have a most sensitive appreciation of

poetry in others. This is his great merit as a critic. To say that he had no critical principles would be most unjust. *Imagination and Fancy* and *Wit and Humour* show that he could draw a distinction with admirable precision, and few critical books give with greater clearness the reasons for admiration or for disapproval. But their main value consists in their copiousness of illustration. They are, indeed, books of selections with illustrative essays; and even the essays are full of quotation. This is Hunt's strength. To him, poetry was a delight; and he is far more at home in praise than in censure. One of his special critical gifts was his skill in metre and his sensitiveness to it. He perfectly understood—and he was almost, if not quite, the first critic who did this—what Keats and Coleridge aimed at. His analysis of vowel and consonant sounds, and his examination of the pause, mechanical and uniform in Pope, more varied in Dryden, masterly in Milton, are admirable.

Unlike Hunt, Thomas De Quincey (1785—1859) was greater in other things than in criticism. It is to his impassioned prose in parts of the *English Opium Eater* (1822) and in *Suspiria de Profundis* (1822) that he owes his place in literature. These and a few other things, such as his tale of the *Revolt of the Tartars*, have been praised quite up to, if not beyond, their deserts; for the fatal vice of diffuseness weakens nearly everything he has done, and, master as he is of prose harmonies, the reader becomes at last impatient to get to some point, or to the end. On the other hand, the *Autobiographic Sketches* have seldom been adequately appreciated. They show De Quincey at the very best. His garrulity is amiable and pleasant, he has touches of humour, and his more masculine elder brother is an admirable foil to himself. The picture of a sensitive and highly imaginative childhood, with its unsuspected sources of terror and suffering, has rarely if ever been better drawn.

De Quincey made the acquaintance of John Wilson while he was living at the Lakes, and Wilson introduced him to *Blackwood*, both as a contributor and as a figure in the *Noctes*, where he is skilfully and sympathetically depicted. He was at once a valuable and a troublesome recruit; troublesome, because he hardly knew

the meaning, and certainly did not appreciate the need, of punctuality, though he showed wonderful ingenuity in devising excuses for the absence of it; valuable, because of his knowledge, his taste and his command of language. He was just the man for an age of periodicals. He could work upon an immense variety of subjects; but he had not the strength of will or the power of concentration to do more than write 'articles' upon them. His besetting sin of diffuseness mars him in criticism as in everything else. He meanders on indefinitely in harmonious prose, and only too often drowns the thought under a flood of words. There are excellent things in his *Style*, in *Homer and the Homeridae* and in the article on *Pope*; but these papers are all too long. On the Germans, poets as well as philosophers, he is usually superficial. Occasionally he draws a happy distinction, as in the famous division between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power; occasionally too his imagination illuminates a dark passage as in the paper *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth*. But the recollection of such things only serves to deepen the regret that, like his fellow-victim of the opium habit, Coleridge, he so seldom produced what was worthy of his great powers.

It is impossible to pass to the younger men without being conscious of a descent, the nature and extent of which is perhaps most clearly seen if we compare *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844) with the work of Hazlitt published nineteen years before. The two books stand in a different relation to the periods criticised. Hazlitt's was the summing up of an era of literature at its close; for most of the writers with whom he dealt had done their greatest work before he wrote. Horne, who edited the later book, and his coadjutors, dealt, for the most part, with men who were only at the opening of their career. This, no doubt, helps to account for the fact that in their case the selection is less sure and happy and the treatment less firm; but it does not account for the decline in quality throughout the book. This impression of decline is confirmed when we observe the changes in the management of the great periodicals. Macvey Napier was a man of far less talent than Jeffrey, and Elwin was unmistakably inferior

to Lockhart. *The Monthly Repository*, for many years the organ of the Unitarians, had unusual good fortune in its editors. William Johnson Fox (1786–1864) has the distinction of being the first man who welcomed Browning, and fully deserves the praise due to keenness of judgment and to courage; for he never shrank from expressing an unpopular opinion. On his retirement, the *Repository* was edited successively by men so highly gifted as Leigh Hunt and R. H. Horne; but Fox had changed its *rôle* from that of a party organ to that of an impartial advocate of truth; and, alas, the change did not pay. But the *Repository* was exceptional. As a rule, the editors were undistinguished, and so was the work of the contributors. Though the name of Abraham Hayward (1801–1884), author of *The Art of Dining* (1852), carried weight, his *Biographical and Critical Essays* are not stimulating. James Hannay (1827–1873) wrote with vigour and insight in his lectures on satire and satirists, and not a little fancy is shown in the suggestive comparisons; but his scholarship was defective. Had he been granted a longer life and better health, George Brimley (1819–1857) might have made a great name; but his actual achievement was little more than a very suggestive essay on Tennyson (*Cambridge Essays*, 1855) and a volume of essays posthumously published.

E. S. Dallas (1828–1879), in his extremely able and interesting book, *The Gay Science* (1866), itself an admirable contribution to critical literature, divides criticism into three classes, editorial, biographic and scientific. The first, which he ranks lowest, received a great development during the period with which we have to deal. One of the marked characteristics of the Revolutionary period was the revival of interest in Elizabethan literature, which showed itself both in the creative work of the time and in the illuminative criticism of Coleridge and Lamb. The interest continued, but its manifestation in criticism became more editorial and biographic, and less aesthetic. Shakespeare was edited and re-edited, the minor dramatists received their share of attention, and Bacon absorbed the life of one whom the best judges of the time pronounced capable of important original work.

A spice of a kind of interest not unexampled, but happily uncommon, was contributed to Shakespeare criticism by John Payne Collier (1789–1883), whose *History of English Dramatic Poetry* (1831) is a work of such solid merit as to deepen greatly the regret at the stain upon the author's name. At that time Collier was honoured by every scholar, and to all appearance deserved honour. His edition of Shakespeare (1842–1844) was received with the respect due to the work of one who had proved his capacity to deal with the subject. Not till 1852 was the notorious Perkins Folio heard of; and in the following year some of its readings were embodied in *Notes and Emendations to the Plays of Shakespeare*. On the word of Collier they were, naturally enough, received as genuine even by such a competent judge as James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps (1820–1889), who had already made considerable progress in those studies which made him the foremost authority of his generation on the life of Shakespeare. Halliwell, as he then was, felt the scholar's debt to an elder scholar who had pointed him the way; and to the end he refused to believe that Collier was not himself deceived. Others were less chivalrous, or more clear-sighted. Singer, who afterwards issued a useful edition of Shakespeare, gave the first public utterance to scepticism in his *Text of Shakespeare Vindicated* (1853). Collier, for his part, buttressed one dubious story with another, contradicted himself, issued complete lists of the Perkins readings which proved to be incomplete, made another wonderful discovery of a set of long-lost notes on Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare and Milton, and in the end left no doubt in any impartial mind that he was one of the victims of the curious mania for literary fraud. But though this taint vitiates all of Collier's own work, even the forgeries of the Perkins Folio did good indirectly, for they deepened the interest in the text of Shakespeare, and had some influence on the work of Howard Staunton (1810–1874), famous for his chess, and of Alexander Dyce (1798–1869), as well as of Singer. Dyce, who was perhaps the best of this group of critics, was a wide, as well as an accurate, student of the Elizabethan drama, and he edited Middleton, Beaumont and Fletcher, Marlowe, and Webster, as well as

Shakespeare. As regards the text however the greatest and completest work of the generation is the well-known Cambridge Shakespeare (1863–1866), which was reissued in 1887.

The *Concordance* (1879) of Mary Cowden-Clarke can hardly be ranked as either literature or criticism; but it was a most useful aid to criticism and a very solid and creditable piece of work. Her husband's lectures on Shakespeare, delivered between 1854 and 1856, had considerable influence in their day in popularising the great poet, and the parts which have been published are still worth reading. A union at once matrimonial and literary was a thing no longer rare. S. C. Hall and his wife, Henry Nelson and Sara Coleridge and William and Mary Howitt are examples, as well as the Brownings and G. H. Lewes and George Eliot.

This was a natural enough result of the adoption by women of the profession of letters. Another result was the study of the problem of sex from a new point of view. Consciously or unconsciously, this problem influences the work of nearly all the women of the time; and a curious illustration of it is afforded by the group of women who have written about Shakespeare. We see it in Mrs Jameson's *Characteristics of Shakespeare's Women* (1832), and in Lady Martin's book *On some of Shakespeare's Female Characters* (1885); and though Mary Cowden-Clarke is an exception in her *Concordance*, she betrays the influence in a way of her own in her *Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* (1851).

Anna Brownell Jameson (1794–1860) fills a larger place in literature by virtue of the series of works beginning with *Sacred and Legendary Art* (1848), treating in similar fashion the legends of the saints, of the monastic orders and of the Madonna, and ending with *The History of Our Lord* (1864) which was left incomplete at her death and was finished by Lady Eastlake; but it is doubtful whether she ever did better work than in her early Shakespearean studies. Her art-criticism was partly an inheritance from her father, a miniature painter, partly the result of the stimulus given by Ruskin to such studies; but good judges condemn her as inaccurate and deficient in technical knowledge. In the Shakespeare criticisms she knew her ground; she brought

to the subject certain special gifts which men could not possess—unless they rivalled Shakespeare himself; and as she also wrote well, the result is a very fresh, interesting and suggestive book Helena Savile Faucit, Lady Martin (1817–1898), had qualifications even higher; for she possessed not only literary skill, and the sympathy and understanding of a woman for women, but the long training of the stage as well, on which she was perhaps the greatest interpreter, since Mrs Siddons, of the very characters whom she had to consider critically in her book.

More criticism of the editorial and biographical kinds has been expended upon Shakespeare than upon any other English writer. The editorial work has been fruitful; but though portly volumes have been written, there is still a "plentiful lack" of ascertained facts of the biographical sort. To the great contemporary whose name has been so curiously associated with Shakespeare's, one man in the Victorian era devoted himself completely. Of criticism of the editorial sort there is no more remarkable example than James Spedding's (1808–1881) edition of the works of Bacon. Spedding was stirred by Macaulay's celebrated essay, which he answered pungently and in many points convincingly in *Evenings with a Reviewer* (1848). From this he was led on to edit the works with an exhaustive but formless biography. He did the work with such characteristic deliberation that it occupied his whole life. There is room to doubt whether Spedding's unsparing devotion has, after all, attained its end. It was easy enough to show that Macaulay was wrong with regard to the Baconian philosophy, and not difficult to point out the one-sidedness and exaggeration of his criticisms of Bacon's life. But to win acceptance for a fundamentally different view of the life was a much harder task. Englishmen like R. W. Church and foreign scholars like Brandes remained unconvinced, and the question of the character of Bacon must be regarded as still unsettled. Spedding sacrificed forty years, says FitzGerald, "to re-edit his [Bacon's] Works, which did not need such re-edition, and to vindicate his Character which could not be cleared[1]." And those forty years were years of the life of one

[1] FitzGerald's *Letters*.

who, in the judgment of FitzGerald himself, of Thackeray and of Tennyson, was among the ablest men of the time.

Scholarly work of the editorial species is indispensable; but it would be extravagance of praise to assign to such work a high rank as literature. It belongs to the literature of knowledge, not to the literature of power, and recalls the schools of Alexandria rather than the great creative ages of Greece. This may, indeed, be said of all criticism. But the division between the two kinds of literature is not fixed and definite, and as the creative may sink towards the critical, so the critical may rise towards the creative. In the hands of the greatest masters criticism becomes a new sort of creation; in Lessing's, unfolding great principles; in Goethe's, turning upon genius the flash-light of a genius in most cases greater than that which is criticised. Editorial criticism, however, can in no case rise to this level, and is not to be censured for not being that which in the nature of things it cannot be. But, tested by its own canons, it reveals the mediocre character of criticism after the age of the Revolution was ended. For not only do we fail to discover any critical intuition comparable to that of Lamb or of Coleridge, but there is no display of editorial acumen equal to that of Theobald, and no work of monumental learning like the great variorum edition of Dr H. Howard Furness in the present day. Neither is the kind of work to which the majority devote themselves the highest, nor is that which they accomplish of the best quality in its kind.

As time goes on, however, the depleted ranks are filled once more, and soon after the middle of the century a number of men of high genius in poetry, in fiction, or in other forms of literature, have to be ranked as critics likewise. Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Thackeray and Rossetti are all critics as well as great creative writers. Walter Bagehot and John Brown are men of inferior rank to these, yet still of great gifts. Bagehot ranks primarily as an economist and constitutional writer, and is discussed elsewhere; but in the fifties and sixties he was a power in criticism likewise. Sound judgment, a sense of humour, sympathy, and a gift for epigrammatic expression, make his criticisms at once instructive and eminently readable.

Dr John Brown (1810–1882) of Edinburgh is less easily placed, either as to his rank or as to his class. He was not a great genius, yet he was too exquisite to be fairly denominated a minor writer. Though he wrote of many things, he did not write much on any one subject; but a vein of criticism runs through a great deal of his work, and it is clear that he possessed the critical gift in a very uncommon degree. He was one of those men, more common at the bar than in the medical profession, who, while regarding their own occupation as the business of their lives, consider themselves imperfectly qualified for that business unless they can feel and cherish intellectual and literary interests outside its bounds. He never looked upon himself as a man of letters; his papers were "horae subsecivae"; and yet he felt that while he was writing them he was fitting himself all the better for his work as a physician. In the essays on professional subjects included in *Horae Subsecivae* there is no point more frequently insisted on than this. It was however reading and thinking on extra-professional subjects that he considered necessary, rather than writing upon them. He drifted into writing, never took himself seriously, and never was fully conscious how wonderful was the gift of style which he possessed. But for his wife it is probable that many of his papers would never have been written. In 1846 Brown started on his career as a writer with a series of essays on art. An article on Ruskin's *Modern Painters* followed; after that came *Locke and Sydenham*; and so gradually the materials for the three volumes of *Horae Subsecivae* were compiled. These volumes give Brown a niche among those authors who are not only admired but loved. There is not a little in them, in their humour and exquisite felicity of style, which calls to mind Charles Lamb; and the reader's feeling for Brown has that quality of personal friendship of which almost all readers of Lamb are conscious. Another author whom they frequently suggest is Brown's fellow-physician, Oliver Wendell Holmes, a writer stronger, richer and more varied than he, but hardly so delicately beautiful.

Brown's writings are always unpretentious. There is no straining for effect, no display of learning, not the slightest

apparent effort even to write well. The simple limpid English seems to flow quite naturally from the pen. It is either a triumph of the art of concealing art, or, more probably, a wonderful example of a natural gift refined and perfected by constant intercourse with the best writers, old and new. There is much that is more ambitious and more eloquent in the prose of his time; but there is nothing more flawless than the prose of Dr John Brown. Probably the perfection of his work will preserve his name when the names of many who made far more noise in their day have been forgotten. That unobtrusive modesty which pervades Brown's writings, as it marked his daily life, begets a tendency to underrate the serious worth of *Horae Subsecivae.* The author claims so little for his essays that we are in danger of accepting them too nearly at his own estimate; and it takes an effort of reflection to realise how great is their range and how solid their value, as well as how beautiful their style. His essays on *Locke and Sydenham* and *Free Competition in Medicine* are serious contributions to medical literature, full, not of that medical science in which he did not much believe, but of that benign wisdom which is the crowning grace of the experienced physician. And perhaps Brown's command over character is due to the medical experience whence this wisdom springs. At least his theory was that the physician had to treat the man, not the disease; and he could not treat him without understanding him.

As an art critic, though he had no pretensions to technical training, Brown had few equals. All that he wrote on painting and on literature was the outcome of a singularly refined and sensitive natural taste. He felt instinctively the meaning of the painter or of the poet, and he explained it in the aptest words. There is no more sympathetic bit of criticism in the English language than his comments on the song, "Oh, I'm wat, wat!" There are few more simply touching pieces than the paper on Thackeray's death. A most refined sense of the poetical breathes in the essay on Henry Vaughan. It was not capacity, but only time, and perhaps inclination, that were wanting to make Brown one of the greatest critics of his generation. The pity is that time did not serve or inclination move him more frequently. His

criticisms of the men who made Edinburgh great during his own boyhood would have been a precious possession. He knew some of them. Jeffrey had called to offer his congratulations on *Locke and Sydenham*. He had listened to the eloquence of Wilson in his lecture-room. He had often with boyish reverence watched Scott limp along Princes Street to his house in Castle Street. And he loved what they, and especially what Scott, loved. He was almost as deeply imbued as Scott himself with the love of the Border scenery—and of dogs. He thought that only Homer, or King David, or Sir Walter could have worthily rehearsed the battle of the Game Chicken with Yarrow, and his death by the bite of Rab; but he proves that at least one more was quite worthy to treat the theme. It is with papers of this sort, neither professional nor critical, that Brown's name is most closely, and in the minds of many almost exclusively, associated. *Rab and his Friends*, *Our Dogs* and *Marjorie Fleming*—these are the titles that most readily rise to the mind when we think of him. No doubt he was fortunate in his subjects. There has only been one Marjorie Fleming; but there was only one John Brown, who could have so delicately handled her touching little story. And how common in a coarser hand might have been the story of Rab and his friends! Just a big mastiff, a carrier and his suffering wife; but man, woman and dog are alike immortal. Brown is the prince of all writers on dogs: there is probably nothing of its kind in literature equal to *Our Dogs*. The animals all have characters and stand apart from one another in the memory, distinct and individual. Wolfe's name lives in literature for the sake of his *Burial of Sir John Moore*; Campbell's would be safe if he had written nothing but *Ye Mariners of England*; and Gray's, if it were only for the great *Elegy*. Brown's three essays are as unique and perfect, each in its way, as any of these; and though small bodies of prose are a less sure guarantee of permanent remembrance than short pieces of verse, it may be hoped that they will keep his memory green for generations yet to come.

Most of the greater men who have been named were critics of literature only by the way, yet even their by-work served to ennoble

criticism. No one who has read Thackeray's *English Humourists* can doubt the greatness of his critical faculty. It is attested also by numerous detached papers, by his parodies and by many passages in the novels. The Pre-Raphaelites created a school in criticism as well as in painting and poetry. Ruskin was one of the greatest forces of the century in all matters of taste. He and the Pre-Raphaelites, however, are more particularly critics of art in the narrower sense than critics of literature; and as such they will be considered in the next section of this chapter. There remains only Arnold, the true successor, by reason of the quality and the influence of his work, of Coleridge and Lamb.

Matthew Arnold is one of the few men who are almost equally important in poetry and in prose. The majority of those who are keenly conscious of his charm will rank his verse higher than his prose; but it was not as a poet that he had most influence upon his own generation and upon the young men who were rising to maturity as he grew old. In his case, the line between the period of verse and the period of prose is less precisely drawn than it is in the case of Scott; but there is, nevertheless, a clear predominance of poetry during the earlier part of his career, and a clear predominance of prose for the last twenty years of his life. His poetical career came practically to an end in 1867. As a prose writer he made his first appearance in 1853, when the striking preface to the *Poems* of that year proclaimed, to the discerning, the advent of a new force in criticism and of a new master of prose; but the influence most potent in turning him towards prose was, perverse as the fact appears, his tenure of the chair of poetry at Oxford, which began in 1857 and lasted for ten years. The reason is plain enough. Arnold held that the main effort of the intellect of Europe had been for many years a critical effort, while English literature was singularly deficient in criticism. By "criticism" he meant a good deal more than literary criticism. He defined it as "the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is[1]." But though literary criticism was not the whole, it was an indispensable part of this critical

[1] *On Translating Homer.*

movement. Matthew Arnold inherited the teacher's instinct, and he was profoundly influenced by his sense of what his country needed. To be useful to England was always one of his greatest ambitions; and he knew that the way to be useful was to supply that wherein England was deficient.

To Arnold's tenure of the professorship of poetry we owe directly *On Translating Homer* (1861), *Last Words on Translating Homer* (1862) and *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867); indirectly, we owe to it also the classical drama *Merope* (1858), which Mr Herbert Paul characterises as "the real inauguration" of the professorship. *Merope* itself may be regarded as a sort of critical essay (an unfortunate one) in verse; and there went with it a long and carefully-reasoned preface, in which Arnold advocated the cause of classical as against romantic poetry, as he had already done in the preface to the poems of 1853. From the year 1863 onwards Arnold was a frequent contributor to periodicals. In the latter part of his life he was much in request for lectures and addresses, the most important of which—including the *Speech at Eton*, *Emerson* and the fine address on Milton, delivered only a few weeks before Arnold's death—have been reprinted in one or other of the volumes of essays.

All Arnold's prose is critical in the wider sense, and the most important part of it is devoted to the criticism of literature. To this class belong parts of the *Mixed Essays* (1879) and *Discourses in America* (1885), as well as the two series of *Essays in Criticism* (1865 and 1888). It is these latter books, with the lectures on Homer and the admirable preface to the poems of 1853 (afterwards somewhat incongruously appended to the *Irish Essays*) which show Arnold at his best in criticism. Of all the books he ever wrote, the first series of *Essays on Criticism* has been the most widely and deeply influential. It is no richer in critical insight and wisdom than the second series, but to many young men it came with much of the force of a revelation. Arnold's later writings reiterated the lesson, but they could not convey a lesson so fresh and so original as that carried by the volume of 1865. Even where the writer's views did not win assent, the wealth of thought and of illustration, the charm of style, the

persuasiveness, the perfect breeding, commanded attention. For thirty years there had been no such criticism in English. Man of genius as he was, Ruskin's was marred by capriciousness, and the show of principle which he spread over his criticisms was largely illusory. No one else, not even Bagehot, combined the necessary knowledge with sympathetic insight and the power to write English, in nearly as high a degree as Arnold. Other critics made happy hits, but no other critic of the time worked so much upon principles fully understood and clearly explained.

Arnold, the panegyrist of classical lucidity, proportion and restraint, may be regarded as at once the complement and the corrective of the great critics of the Revolutionary epoch. Their revolt against the eighteenth century had at last been completely successful. Principles akin to theirs reigned in poetry, in painting and in architecture, and were increasingly influential in religion. Only in the sphere of science, and in politics, where Benthamism was now supreme, may the eighteenth century be said to have retained its influence. Arnold thought that romanticism had been overdone, and that a new classicism was imperatively needed. It must not however be the classicism of the Queen Anne writers. They and their successors down to the Revolution lived in an age of prose. "A sort of spiritual east wind was at that time blowing[1]." "Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose[2]." The difference between genuine poetry and the poetry of their school is that "their poetry is conceived and composed in their wits, genuine poetry is conceived and composed in the soul[3]." Nevertheless, their time is "our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century"; and in the light they give the nineteenth must correct its own mistiness and mysticism.

Arnold's objections to romanticism were partly due to the nature of the thing itself, and partly to the sense that there were in it special dangers to the country which it was his constant wish to serve. The classicist and the romanticist are, it has been said, born, not made; and this is clearly true in the case of Arnold. Living when he did, he could not escape the influence of romance,

[1] *Essay on Gray.* [2] *The Study of Poetry.* [3] *Essay on Gray.*

even if he had wished to do so; and he was far too catholic in taste, far too intelligent, to wish it. His sense of its value is shown in the lovely apostrophe to Oxford, perhaps the finest passage in the whole of his prose, where it is as a "queen of romance," "whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age," that he does homage to this most potent of all combatants against his special enemies, the Philistines. Occasionally he shows the influence in his own poems, as in *Tristram and Iseult*. But there is usually something grudging in his admission of the merits of romance, and, when they win him at all, the great romanticists win him by force. He quotes with approval from "the most delicate of living critics: 'Comme tout genre de composition a son écueil particulier, *celui du genre romanesque, c'est le faux*[1].'" He was never a lover of Shelley; it was late before he became ardent in admiration of Keats; he was always at least as fully conscious of the defects of Coleridge as of his merits. He admired the spirit and power of Elizabethan literature, but found it "steeped in humours and whimsicality up to its very lips[2]," and pronounced Chapman's translation of Homer faulty because, for Homer's plainness and directness, it substituted the fancifulness characteristic of the translator's time. And though Arnold has praised Shakespeare in a noble sonnet, even Shakespeare is unsparingly censured for a style in many passages tortured and faultily difficult and a diction fantastic and false. Once and again Arnold insists that, for England, Milton is a safer model than the greatest of dramatists.

Arnold then was by nature unsympathetic towards romantic poetry. For a hundred years romance had been turning more and more towards the Middle Age, of which in Arnold's eyes the characteristics are "its grotesqueness, its conceits, its irrationality[3]." Romance encourages eccentricity, arbitrariness, self-will. Romance is negligent of unity, and attaches extravagant importance to beautiful passages—purple patches. "We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total impression. We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to

[1] *On Translating Homer.* [2] *ibid.* [3] *ibid.*

the language about the action, not to the action itself[1]." Keats's *Isabella* is "a perfect treasure-house of graceful and felicitous words and images[2]"; but the effect of the story itself "is absolutely null." Arnold thought that, even when they prided themselves on their fidelity, the romanticists were apt to go wrong by attending only, or too much, to the parts. The Pre-Raphaelites, he held, did not understand "that the peculiar effect of nature resides in the whole and not in the parts[3]."

These evils of the romantic tendency seemed to Arnold especially dangerous in the case of England, because they are the innate tendency of the English race. The habit of doing things by bits, distrust of ideas and idealism, an exaggerated individualism which takes pride in each man's being a law unto himself, are characteristic, and are fostered by lawlessness in literature. England is "the native home of intellectual eccentricity of all kinds[4]," a country where in 1829 an elaborate book was published, "which enchanted the English *reverends*, to make out that Mahomet was the little horn of the he-goat that figures in the eighth chapter of Daniel, and that the Pope was the great horn[5]." This is provinciality in the extreme, the spirit whence springs "the dissidence of dissent." It is essential to find a corrective.

Arnold's corrective, on its literary side, is classicism as opposed to romanticism. In the preface to the poems of 1853, in the lectures on translating Homer, in the address on Milton, from the earliest of his published essays to the latest, he stated and reiterated his conviction of the vital importance of the classical spirit and style to a race and a literature so rich and so great as he knew the English to be, yet deplorably deficient—as he thought—in what the classical spirit could impart. He found the characteristics of the Greeks to be "calm, cheerfulness, disinterested objectivity[6]." He found Greek literature to be dominated by the idea of the whole. Above all he found classical literature to be pervaded by "the grand style," which he could discover in only two poetical works in the modern languages, Dante's *Divine Comedy*

[1] Preface to *Poems*, 1853.
[2] *ibid.*
[3] *On Translating Homer.*
[4] *Literary Influence of Academies.*
[5] *ibid.*
[6] Preface to *Poems*, 1853.

and Milton's *Paradise Lost*[1]. Here then was something not superfluous, but specially needed. This sense of the whole is, in Arnold's opinion, just what is most lacking in the English poets; this grand style is the rarest of all things in the whole range of modern literature. And students of Arnold's poetry know how highly he valued calm and cheerfulness as the best means to cure the "sick hurry" and "divided aims" of modern life, and to enable the modern man to "possess his soul."

It was a cognate feeling which led Arnold to turn to France rather than to Germany for models and instruction. The English fault lay in being too Teutonic; and therefore Germany, rich as she was in ideas, was for England a dangerous guide. France, on the contrary, with her Latin culture, her lucidity, her love of logical completeness, possessed just what England lacked. Arnold therefore made the first serious effort of the century to turn England back to that study of French literature which had been so influential in the previous century. He neither underestimated German nor overestimated French literature. He was one of the most ardent admirers of Goethe. While he thought poetry the flower and consummation of literature, he had a low opinion of French poetry; and its great instrument, the Alexandrine, seemed to him poor and tinkling in comparison with the hexameter or with English blank verse. "France, famed in all great arts, in none supreme," indicates his belief that French literature never soars where Shakespeare and where Milton are. Genius, he says, "is mainly an affair of energy[2]"; and therefore England, which is pre-eminent for energy, has produced some of the greatest geniuses of all time. Clearly then it was no belief in the inherent or general superiority of Frenchmen which made Arnold turn for instruction to France. It was his persistent utilitarianism, his conviction of the vanity of dwelling boastfully upon that which we possess and of the utility of searching out and trying to remedy our deficiencies. Our true business was "to see ourselves as others see us." France, with less capacity than England for the

[1] *On Translating Homer.*

[2] *Literary Influence of Academies.* Landor before him had declared energy to be "the soul of poetry." *Southey and Porson.*

highest flights of genius, was eminent for certain qualities which England had not, or had in much inferior degree. "Openness of mind and flexibility of intelligence were very signal characteristics of the Athenian people in ancient times; everybody will feel that. Openness of mind and flexibility of intelligence are remarkable characteristics of the French people in modern times; at any rate, they strikingly characterise them as compared with us; I think everybody, or almost everybody, will feel that[1]." English energy can produce the genius of Shakespeare; but when it takes the wrong road it is capable of identifying Mahomet with the little horn and the Pope with the great horn. If openness of mind and flexibility of intelligence can be grafted on it, absurdities of this sort will become impossible.

Arnold was attracted all the more strongly towards France because of his conviction that what Europe specially needed was criticism, combined with his perception that the qualities of intellect and style characteristic of the French writers were such as to make them great in the field of criticism. In France therefore, more than elsewhere in the modern world, was to be found the aid necessary towards filling a great void in English literature. For the spiritual nurture of England, modern France was the complement of ancient Athens.

A similar predilection is manifest in what Arnold has to say about the literature of Germany. He thinks that Carlyle made a mistake in attaching too much importance to Tieck, Novalis, Richter, and the romantic writers generally. Goethe was "the manifest centre of German literature[2]"; but from him as spring, the main stream was that which flowed, not through the romance writers, but through Heine, who was destined to destroy the romantic school. The great value of Goethe, as he himself declared, was that he had been the liberator of the Germans and especially of the German poets. And this he was, in Arnold's opinion, because his "profound, imperturbable naturalism is absolutely fatal to all routine thinking[3]." The great work of Heine, in his turn, was that he brought the genius of France to bear upon the genius of Germany. "Germany, that vast mine of

[1] *Literary Influence of Academies.* [2] *Heine.* [3] *ibid.*

ideas, had no need to import ideas, as such, from any foreign country; and if Heine had carried ideas, as such, from France to Germany, he would but have been carrying coals to Newcastle. But that for which France, far less meditative than Germany, is eminent, is the prompt, ardent, and practical application of an idea, when she seizes it, in all departments of human activity which admit it And that in which Germany most fails, and by failing in which she appears so helpless and impotent, is just the practical application of her innumerable ideas...Heine was, as he calls himself, a 'Child of the French Revolution,' an 'Initiator,' because he vigorously assured the Germans that ideas were not counters or marbles, to be played with for their own sake; because he exhibited in literature modern ideas applied with the utmost freedom, clearness and originality[1]." *Mutatis mutandis*, the work here attributed to Heine is exactly the work which Arnold was attempting to do for England. Once more we are impressed by Arnold's practical instinct, his utilitarianism; we are impressed also by his love for definiteness of meaning and clearness of expression. He will have nothing to do with the mystics; he is full of admiration for those who can make a practical use of ideas which have a meaning for the modern world.

There is nothing else in Arnold's criticism so deep-rooted as his intense practicality; but this is combined with another characteristic rarely found along with it, an almost complete detachment of mind from what are usually called 'practical considerations.' The practical man is generally self-centred; he can take no man's view but his own. But in Arnold's opinion, to be self-centred or self-willed is absolutely incompatible with useful criticism. The Greeks are valuable to us because one of the qualities of the Greek spirit is "disinterested objectivity." An often-quoted passage in the essay *On the Function of Criticism at the Present Time* declares that the rule for English criticism may be summed up in one word—*disinterestedness*, and further explains that disinterestedness is shown by "keeping aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things.'" The criticism of literature, he means, must not be deflected from its course by considerations of politics, or religion,

[1] *Heine.*

or of anything extraneous whatsoever. All this must be eliminated. Caprice, waywardness, "provinciality," must be eliminated. "I wish to decide nothing of my own authority; the great art of criticism is to get oneself out of the way and to let humanity decide[1]." Only thus can criticism be valuable and teach anything worth learning. To keep aloof from "what is called 'the practical view of things'" is the indispensable condition of being practical in the better sense; for the practical view, so-called, is the view distorted by irrelevant considerations. It precludes flexibility of mind; while "to try and approach truth on one side after another, not to strive or cry, nor to persist in pressing forward, on any one side, with violence and self-will,—it is only thus, it seems to me, that mortals may hope to gain any vision of the mysterious Goddess, whom we shall never see except in outline, but only thus even in outline[2]."

Disinterestedness then is the first and greatest rule of criticism. But the critic cannot be disinterested, to any purpose, *in vacuo*. An indispensable part of his equipment is knowledge,—knowledge of the best that has been thought and said in the world. Deficiency in this respect has been a frequent cause of disaster in England. "We show, as a nation, laudable energy and persistence in walking according to the best light that we have, but are not quite careful enough, perhaps, to see that our light be not darkness[3]." The equipment of knowledge is as indispensable even for the poet as it is for the critic. "The English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough[4]." And again: "The true key to how much in our Byron, even in our Wordsworth, is this! —that they had their source in a great movement of feeling, not in a great movement of mind[5]." In the same spirit, Arnold declares in the *Letters* that "no modern poet can make very much of his business unless he is pre-eminently strong" in intellectual power; and even Tennyson fell below his standard in this respect.

The critic must know the best that has been thought and said,

[1] *Pagan and Mediæval Religious Sentiment.*
[2] Preface to *Essays in Criticism.*
[3] *Culture and Anarchy.*
[4] *Function of Criticism.*
[5] *ibid.*

both in ancient and in modern times, not only in his own language, but in the languages from which his native literature is derived, and in those which are producing literature concurrently. It is thus, by the comparative method, by seeing how others do what we also are impelled to attempt, that "provinciality" is avoided. But although he insisted on the need of knowledge, Arnold was fully alive to the dangers of a vast load of learning. What it was vital to know was not *everything* that had been thought and said, but *the best*. He was aware that "the historical estimate" often resulted in strange freaks, and that the discoverer of some forgotten poetaster was under temptation to magnify the value of his discovery. He was serious in his answer to the antagonist who charged him with ignorance. Pleading guilty to the charge, he added: "And yet, perverse as it seems to say so, I sometimes find myself wishing, when dealing with these matters of poetical criticism, that my ignorance were even greater than it is. To handle these matters properly there is needed a poise so perfect that the least overweight in any direction tends to destroy the balance. Temper destroys it, a crotchet destroys it, even erudition may destroy it. To press to the sense of the thing itself with which one is dealing, not to go off on some collateral issue about the thing, is the hardest matter in the world. The 'thing itself' with which one is here dealing,—the critical perception of poetic truth,—is of all things the most volatile, elusive, and evanescent; by even pressing too impetuously after it, one runs the risk of losing it. The critic of poetry should have the finest tact, the nicest moderation, the most free, flexible, and elastic spirit imaginable; he should be indeed the 'ondoyant et divers,' the *undulating and diverse* being of Montaigne. The less he can deal with his subject simply and freely, the more things he has to take into account in dealing with it,—the more, in short, he has to encumber himself,—so much the greater force of spirit he needs to retain his elasticity. But one cannot exactly have this greater force by wishing for it; so, for the force of spirit one has, the load put upon it is often heavier than it will well bear. The late Duke of Wellington said of a certain peer that 'it was a great pity his education had been so far too much for his abilities.' In like

manner, one often sees erudition out of all proportion to its owner's critical faculty. Little as I know, therefore, I am always apprehensive, in dealing with poetry, lest even that little should prove 'too much for my abilities[1].'"

In the essay on the *Literary Influence of Academies* Arnold criticises the provincial spirit, and, in contrasting with it "the tone of the centre," he, whether consciously or unconsciously, portrays his own critical method. "The provincial spirit exaggerates the value of its ideas for want of a high standard at hand by which to try them. Or rather, for want of such a standard, it gives one idea too much prominence at the expense of others; it orders its ideas amiss; it is hurried away by fancies; it likes and dislikes too passionately, too exclusively. Its admiration weeps hysterical tears, and its disapprobation foams at the mouth. So we get the *eruptive* and the *aggressive* manner in literature; the former prevails most in our criticism, the latter in our newspapers. For, not having the lucidity of a large and centrally placed intelligence, the provincial spirit has not its graciousness; it does not persuade, it makes war; it has not urbanity, the tone of the city, of the centre, the tone which always aims at a spiritual and intellectual effect, and not excluding the use of banter, never disjoins banter itself from politeness, from felicity." No more admirable account could be penned, both of what Arnold consistently avoided, and of what he aimed at and did. He never weeps hysterical tears, never foams at the mouth, never makes war. He is always gracious and urbane, and his banter is never disjoined from politeness. Arnold's wit could be extremely cutting, as the essay on Shelley proves; but it is always scrupulously courteous. He grievously provoked some of his antagonists; but his own good-nature was never ruffled, and no one could ever say of him that he had overstepped the bounds of perfect breeding. He is separated by the diameter of the ecliptic from the bludgeon and blunderbuss criticism of the early periodicals. No one was more persistent in opinion when he felt himself to be right. His warfare against Philistinism, for example, was life-long (though he first imported the term from Germany in the essay on

[1] *Last Words on Translating Homer.*

Heine). His advocacy of "the grand style" begins in his earliest critical essay; and in the latest thing he ever wrote we find it set over against that Philistinism: "All the Anglo-Saxon contagion, all the flood of Anglo-Saxon commonness, beats vainly against the great style but cannot shake it, and has to accept its triumph[1]." Yet it is the truth of the opinions that he values, not the fact that the opinions are his own; it is the falsity of other views that raises his opposition, and the fact that they are the views of certain persons with whom he has crossed swords is unimportant. He had little of that combativeness which is conspicuous in Huxley. "It is not in my nature,—some of my critics would rather say, not in my power,—to dispute on behalf of any opinion, even my own, very obstinately[2]," is a judgment which shows sound insight into himself. He did not dispute on behalf of his opinions; but so long as he retained them he reiterated them. He knew enough about education to be aware that in many cases the truth can only prevail by being frequently repeated.

The whole of Arnold's prose, as well as much of his verse, is, as has been already said, critical in spirit and substance. But besides the volumes which criticise literature, there are three other groups of his prose writings which require some notice. One embraces the works which he wrote in his professional character as an inspector of schools, an office which he held from 1851 till just two years before his sudden death in April, 1888. In the course of this occupation he wrote numerous reports which are buried in blue-books, but he also wrote several volumes which have been published separately. Some of the work of which they are the record Arnold thoroughly enjoyed. He was foreign assistant-commissioner under the commission which was charged with the duty of enquiring into the state of popular education in England; and he entered with zest into his duties of investigating the schools and universities of France and Germany. The volumes which embody the results at which he arrived have all the lucidity and much of the attractiveness which characterised their author; but it is hardly in the nature of things that parlia-

[1] *Milton.*

[2] Preface to *Essays in Criticism*, v.

mentary reports, even when they are the work of the most eminent authors, should live.

Of greater importance are the social and political and theological criticisms of Arnold. His first separate publication in prose was a political pamphlet, *England and the Italian Question* (1859), and the political interest is manifest in his literary criticisms. It finds varied expression in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), which is described as "an essay in political and social criticism," in *Mixed Essays* (1879), in *Irish Essays* (1882) and in *Discourses in America* (1885). The very best of Arnold's criticism on the social rather than the political side is contained in *Friendship's Garland* (1871), which he was curiously unwilling to reprint. These letters, which were first printed in *The Pall Mall Gazette* between 1866 and 1870, are the richest of all Arnold's writings in wit and humour. But though the manner is light the purpose is serious, and there is far more wisdom in the easy banter than in many tomes of solemn disquisition.

Many of the political essays have suffered more or less from the change of political interests or the solution of the problems discussed; but there is much in them that has a permanent value. Arnold was a liberal who kept himself detached from party. He thought that current politics had little bearing upon what really interested him,—English civilisation. He was not without his prejudices, and his opposition to the Burials Bill, which removed a monstrous injustice, cannot be recalled now without astonishment. No doubt, too, he was sometimes academic. But, on the whole, a review of his opinions shows the value of detachment and disinterestedness. Take, for example, the triple thesis of *Ecce, convertimur ad Gentes*. It is admirable for its frankness. Addressing an assembly of working men, Arnold, with perfect candour, declares his conviction that the present system in England materialises the upper class, vulgarises the middle class and brutalises the lower class[1]; but he does it in the way which is least offensive. To remedy this evil he says that ever since, twenty years before, he went about the Continent to learn what

[1] One is reminded of Mill's answer when he was 'heckled' at Westminster: "Did you say that the English working men were liars?" "I did."

the schools were like there, he had "felt convinced that for the progress of our civilisation, here in England, three things were above all necessary:—a reduction in those immense inequalities of condition and property amongst us, of which our land-system is the base; a genuine municipal system; and public schools for the middle classes." It was especially the last point that he brought before his audience of working men; and his special object was, having failed to convince the middle class in their own interest, to prove to the working men that the education of the class above them was their interest as well. The genuine municipal system, in Arnold's sense, has come; the system of secondary education is coming; the levelling of inequalities is still a task for the future, but it seems nearly certain that it will be carried out. Did any practical politician thirty years ago show greater foresight? The interest in civilisation rather than in 'practical' politics seems to have justified itself.

The theological group of writings includes *St Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), *God and the Bible* (1875) and *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877). The obvious criticism, that these volumes are works on theology by one who was not a theologian is, from Arnold's point of view, inconclusive, to say the least of it. For Arnold believed that religion had suffered greatly in the past, and was likely to suffer still more in the future, from the influence of a stereotyped theology. He was the opponent of all creeds; he held that religion had hardened itself into formulae which the growth of knowledge was rendering more and more incredible, and that in order to make it real and vital once more it must be freed from this incubus of the incredible. Those who regarded Arnold as an irreligious man were profoundly mistaken. The most pious soul could hardly show deeper religious feeling than his *Note-Books* (1892) show. But it required either personal knowledge of the man, or exceptional keenness of insight, to perceive this to be true of one who defined God as "a stream of tendency, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness."

Such a man was certainly heterodox, and his treatment of the Bible could not be welcome to those who heartily accepted

the standards of the Church, or who were satisfied with the formulae of Protestant dissent. It is also true that the scholarship in Arnold's books of this class is largely second-hand. He had not the equipment of a Harnack or a Wellhausen. Yet he was remarkably well qualified for the end he had in view; and surely that end was one worth pursuing. His principal thesis is that the true interpretation of the Bible must be a literary, not a scientific, one. The hard measure he dealt to Colenso was due to his dislike of the scientific interpretation. Doubtless he went to excess; for there is scope for a scientific as well as for a literary interpretation. But his view is essentially correct, and theology has committed grave mistakes in ignoring the fluidity of a great work of literature, and interpreting its utterances as if they were the precise and definite premises of a syllogism.

Literature and Dogma, the greatest of Arnold's books on religion, created a good deal of commotion, passing through three editions within the year in which it was published. Objection was taken, not altogether without ground, to its levity of tone; but Arnold's answer was that he wrote in the manner which was natural to him. "Ponderous works," he says, "produce no effect; the religious world which complains of me would not read me if I treated my subject as they say it ought to be treated....I do not mean them to prescribe a mode of treatment of my subject to me which would lead to my being wholly ineffective both with them and with everybody else[1]." He was fully convinced that his work would not injure, but would further, religion, and he pointed to the fact that while, on the one hand, he was blamed for being too negative, on the other, he was taken to task for being too positive. "It will more and more become evident how entirely religious is the work I have done in *Literature and Dogma*. The enemies of religion see this well enough already. It is odd that while I was in my recent article blaming a new book, *Supernatural Religion*, for being purely negative in its Bible criticism, Morley in *The Fortnightly* was praising the book for this very thing, which he says is all we want at present, and contrasting my

[1] *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, ii. 120.

book unfavourably with it as not insisting enough on the negative side and on disproof[1]."

Arnold's theological works were signs of the time, and as such they have a position in the development of thought. Those who care for religion may be divided into two classes. Some, in their conviction of its importance, are prepared to subordinate everything to it. Others, who perhaps esteem it no less highly, feel that in the sphere of religion, as everywhere, reason must be supreme. Within the last half-century the latter class has gained a weight it never had before; and to it are addressed such books as Arnold's, and as Seeley's *Ecce Homo* and his *Natural Religion*. These books are spoken of here, for convenience, as theological; but they might, with greater accuracy, be described as documents in the revolt against theology. They are the layman's protest against the assumption that any profession, or that the students of any particular branch of learning, could have a quasi-monopoly of the questions of deepest import in life. Work like that of Arnold, or of Seeley, or of Oliver Wendell Holmes in America, rests ultimately upon the conviction that there are a hundred ways to the truth about religion, and that the student of history, or of literature, or of science, or of philosophy, may just as likely reach the truth as the student of theology. Nay more, such books imply a deep distrust of the conclusion actually reached by theology, a belief that theology has, as it were, materialised itself in error, and that the business of thought is to cut religion free from a connexion which is damaging to its health, if not dangerous to its existence. They face the question of the possible disappearance of all existing forms of faith, and the rejection of what is called 'supernaturalism'; and they indicate the belief of the writers that even if theology were swept into the rubbish-heap of forgotten literature, and miracles were universally rejected, what is life-giving and sustaining in religion would still remain.

Among contemporary and later critics there is none comparable to Arnold in weight and originality and suggestiveness, but there have been many who have done valuable work. Francis

[1] *Letters*, ii. 117.

Turner Palgrave (1824–1897), the poet, would be noteworthy were it only as the editor of the best of all English anthologies, *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* (1861), in the selection of which he displayed a critical faculty of a very rare sort. Though he had far less critical insight, Sir John Skelton (1831–1897), long known by his pseudonym of Shirley, had a very pleasant style and a deft touch. He was a man of varied gifts, a good story-teller, critic, historian and essayist. His *Table Talk* (1895), *Nugae Criticae* (1862) and *A Campaigner at Home* (1865) are readable and interesting volumes, light, pleasant, witty and, at the same time, wise with a wisdom deeper than is to be found in multitudes of the most solemn books. The defence of Mary Stuart, whatever may be thought of its historical merits, is an admirable piece of composition, and *Maitland of Lethington* (1887–1888) is a fascinating biography, skilfully displaying the workings of an exceedingly keen and subtle mind, and presenting a picture of the age scarcely rivalled in recent years for vividness and pictorial brilliancy. In his criticisms Skelton is happiest when he is easy and informal. Literary allusions lightly intermingled with discussions on sport and passages of observation of nature; illustrations of the credibility of history from the judgments passed on such debated characters as Montrose and Claverhouse; pictures of men, like the admirable one of Sir Charles Napier in *A Campaigner at Home*; these were the things in which Skelton excelled. Another side of his work, illustrated *passim* in *Table Talk* and here and there in the miscellaneous essays, invites comparison with the work of a St Andrews contemporary, A. K. H. Boyd, the "country parson," a kind of "babbling brook," whose *Recreations* (1859) and *Graver Thoughts* (1862) and *Critical Essays* (1865) contain a good deal of skilful writing marred by garrulity and a petty love of gossip.

In the more serious critical work of recent years there are two chief strands, which may be distinguished as, respectively, the intellectual and the emotional. The latter was of the more recent growth. It was associated specially with the University of Oxford, was akin to the "movement" and to the Pre-Raphaelitism which also grew there, and was largely indebted to Ruskin, but with this

profound difference, that whereas the ethical element was vital with Ruskin, it was completely cast out by the aesthetic critics, who held the introduction of moral conceptions to be foreign to art. The chief of this school was Walter Pater, who is treated elsewhere; but John Addington Symonds (1840–1893) may be taken as a not inadequate representative both of the strength and of the weakness of the school. Symonds's *magnum opus*, *The Renaissance in Italy* (1875–1886), belongs to the domain of history, but the history is treated in a characteristic fashion. The first interest of the writer is not politics, nor even religion, but literature and art. In other historians these are, quite rightly, made side issues: Symonds makes them the chief theme. He was partly justified by the peculiar character of the period of which he had chosen to treat; but even at the Renascence they had not quite the prominence he gives them. Even on this side of his work Symonds is too purely aesthetic, and fails to give a fully comprehensive view of the intellectual movement: Mr F. Harrison has acutely remarked that he scarcely mentions the science of the Renascence. There is, in short, a certain lightness in the intellectual foundations which augurs ill for the permanence of the superstructure, pleasing as it is.

The same holds true of Symonds's minor works. His monographs on Shelley (1878), Sir Philip Sidney (1886) and Ben Jonson (1886) are not much more than good journey-work, brilliant in parts, but by no means great as wholes. His *Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama* (1884) is not sufficiently thorough. Perhaps his best work is to be found in *Essays Speculative and Suggestive* (1890), where he was not called upon to sustain his flight after he was tired. The 'speculation' is that of a man with scarcely even an average gift for philosophy, but the 'appreciations' of art show catholicity as well as delicacy of taste, and wide knowledge. The style is apt to be too elaborate, and it is matter for regret that Symonds, in common with all his school, showed too much anxiety about the manner of saying things, and too little about the thing said. Few have been able to ponder about style, as R. L. Stevenson did, without sustaining damage. The healthy impatience of the subject which Froude showed is usually safer.

The aesthetic school of criticism did a real service to literature. It was one phase of "the renascence of wonder"; it told in favour of sympathy as against hard rule, of freedom against convention; yet we must rejoice that it never at any time obtained real predominance in England. However good emotions may be, they are safer under the guidance of intellect; and while freedom is indispensable to excellence, care must be taken that it does not degenerate into license. The habitual moderation of the English mind led to a middle course. Except in a few cases aestheticism was merely an influence, not an uncurbed power. It had force to modify the old judicial style, but not to replace it. The two are blended in Matthew Arnold. They are blended in R. L. Stevenson also, notwithstanding his deep sympathy with aestheticism; while in Stevenson's friend and coadjutor William Ernest Henley (1849–1903)—greater in verse than in prose—there is even a rebound to the opposite extreme. No criticism, even of the early days of the reviews, is more dogmatic, more crudely and even brutally denunciatory, than much of Henley's in *Views and Reviews* (1890–1902). The judge is in his chair, and the black cap is by his side. The brilliant essay on Burns would deserve the highest praise were it not so hard and unsympathetic. His nearest analogue is Heine, whom he follows, *longo intervallo*, in keenness of intellect.

In the closing years of the nineteenth century Henley swayed many of the younger men, but the steadiest influence was rather that of two older men, Richard Holt Hutton (1826–1897) and Leslie Stephen (1832–1904). H. D. Traill (1842–1900) belongs to the same class, but stands on a lower plane.

Hutton's spiritual history is interesting. He was one of the band of intellectual men, astonishingly numerous considering how small the sect was and is, who started life a Unitarian. For a time he edited a Unitarian magazine; but, like Maurice, whom he admired and by whom he was influenced, and whom in some ways he resembled, he worked his way through Unitarianism to Anglicanism. Latterly reports were current that he tended towards Romanism. They were probably quite unfounded; but undoubtedly in the course of his development Hutton's intellect

received a kind of twist or bias which rendered his judgment on matters theological not wholly trustworthy. This was amusingly illustrated on the publication of Darwin's book on earthworms, when *The Spectator* took occasion to remark upon the wonderful evidence of providential government afforded by the fact that the worms were made to do so much work purely for the benefit of humanity. The critic had completely mistaken the drift of Darwin's argument, and failed to observe that the worms derive their own nourishment from the matter which passes through their bodies.

In the earlier part of his career Hutton was closely associated with Walter Bagehot, along with whom he edited *The National Review* from 1855 to 1864. And most loyal he proved himself to the fame of his coadjutor. Long before the true greatness of Bagehot was understood Hutton declared it; and the firm establishment of Bagehot's fame now is largely due to his influence. So too he was one of the most consistent and intelligent admirers of Matthew Arnold's poetry, in days when there were few who understood it. But the great fact of Hutton's life was his connexion with *The Spectator*, of which journal he was joint-editor along with Meredith Townsend from 1861 to 1897. Hutton took special charge of the literary side. In this capacity he may be said to have formed a school. No English journal had a more marked individuality than *The Spectator* under Hutton's guidance, and that individuality must have been due not merely to what he himself wrote, but to the influence which he exercised over the other contributors.

Judged merely by his books Hutton suffers as all journalists are bound to suffer. Much of the work is necessarily ephemeral, nearly all of it must be influenced for evil by the conditions under which it is produced. Hutton's *Essays, Theological and Literary* (1871) and his *Criticisms on Contemporary Thought and Thinkers* (1894) are sound and sensible, but hardly great; and to do justice to him we have to remember that he was not merely the author of these and other works, but the man who, for more than a generation, inspired one of the best and most influential of English literary periodicals.

In pure literature Sir Leslie Stephen is a larger figure. He married Harriet Thackeray the year after the death of her father, and for eleven years (1871–1882) he sat in that very editorial chair which Thackeray had found so thorny. His greatest editorial task, however, was that which he undertook in connexion with *The Dictionary of National Biography*, a work which was under his charge from 1882 to 1891, when advancing years and failing strength caused him to relinquish it.

Leslie Stephen was much more than a literary critic, but for thirty years he was among the most prominent and competent of his time in that capacity among others. Perhaps the most striking merit of his criticism is a broad sanity of judgment, expressed in lucid, vigorous and occasionally humorous English, and always securely based on a knowledge of the facts. The *Hours in a Library* (1874–1879) are excellent reading, and if at times the opinions expressed may seem questionable, they are always worthy of consideration. From the first Stephen shows the historian's and scholar's respect for the solid fact. Hence his tendency to the biographic form, hence, doubtless, his acceptance of the editorial chair of *The Dictionary of National Biography*. He wrote no fewer than four monographs, on Johnson, Pope, Swift and George Eliot, for the *English Men of Letters* series; and in these the biographical element takes precedence of the critical. Few were equal to Stephen in this art of condensed biography; perhaps in the whole series only Mark Pattison's *Milton* is clearly superior to Stephen's *Johnson*. His *Studies of a Biographer* (1898) show the same sort of mastery; though in the shorter studies, especially those of his later years, there is some tendency to slur facts—to leave undone, or to do imperfectly, the indispensable 'hodman' work. Stephen was by temperament inclined to suspect and to avoid those 'appreciations' which were, not exactly popular, but *comme il faut*, through most of his career. He distrusted impressionism: he had no confidence in that which could render no reason more definite than "I feel it."

Stephen was a rationalist, and his greatest works lie outside the domain of literary criticism. The author of *English Thought*

in the Eighteenth Century (1876) and *The English Utilitarians* (1900) was a bigger man than the author of a few literary monographs. But in these greater works we see just the same characteristics, and from them we learn to understand more clearly what precisely was the position of Stephen as a critic. We are particularly impressed with the fact that the author, like Johnson, was fundamentally a moralist. The only questions into which he threw himself whole-heartedly were moral questions. His knowledge, his wide reach of thought, his acuteness, were all at the service of moral truth; so too was something else,—a poignancy of personal feeling which gives to a few of the essays, in particular *An Agnostic's Apology* and *Wordsworth's Ethics*, a fervour of tone which makes them almost poetical.

A great part of Stephen's task was the rehabilitation of the eighteenth century. He had studied its thought, and he understood it as few of his contemporaries did. More than enough, he believed, had been made of its deficiencies; it was time to insist once more upon its merits and its services, its sanity and its lucidity. He carried his favourite Hume with him to the country which he has charmingly described in his *Playground of Europe* (1871), and though, happily, among the snows of the Alps he was sometimes able to forget all books, there or elsewhere he read "David," as he affectionately calls him, closely and intelligently. The work on the Utilitarians was practically a continuation of the history of eighteenth century thought, and the love of the latter is natural in the lover of the former. The same taste is shown in Stephen's criticism. He never could believe that all merit was summed up in romanticism. He was for comprehension; but he evidently thought that it was more important to lay stress upon what was represented by Pope and Swift and Johnson than upon what was represented by Coleridge and Shelley and Keats.

Less of a journalist than Hutton, less of a philosopher than Leslie Stephen, but more of a poet than either, was Richard Garnett (1835–1906), who for many years adorned the British Museum as the keeper of its printed books. Garnett began his literary career with a volume of poems, *Primula and other Lyrics* (1858), which

was succeeded in the following year by *Io in Egypt, and other Poems*. After that for many years Garnett wrote little verse except translations; and, though he had a real lyrical gift, his highest endowments were not poetical. It was as a critic that he did his best work. His *Carlyle* (1887) is the best of all the volumes of the kind which have been written about that much-debated man; and his little monograph on *Coleridge* (1904) is also a model. It was in the fine tone and taste it gave to his criticism that Garnett's poetical turn told best. No man of his time excelled him in this respect.

§ 2. *Aesthetic Criticism.*

Close as is the relation between literature and what are called the fine arts, the latter lie, in themselves, beyond the province of the historian of literature; and until the nineteenth century they never had, in England, a literature of their own. In the eighteenth century the *Discourses* of Sir Joshua Reynolds were the most considerable writings of their class, and none but an extravagant panegyrist could pretend that the literature of that time would be seriously impoverished if they were lost. In truth, though Sir Joshua was admitted to an honoured place in the literary club, the great dictator of letters was profoundly convinced of the superiority of his own craft to that of his friend; and the majority of Johnson's subjects agreed with him. "I had rather," said he, "see the portrait of a dog that I know than all the allegorical paintings they can show me in the world." If Sir Joshua had not painted men and women, all his technical skill would have helped him little to win Johnson's favour and respect.

Before the nineteenth century was very old, evidences of a change of sentiment began to accumulate. Lamb was a warm admirer of Hogarth as well as of Shakespeare. Wordsworth immortalised Sir George Beaumont in his verse. Hazlitt in numerous essays, and above all in the *Conversations of Northcote* (1830), illustrated the union of the criticism of art with literary criticism; and the *Conversations* won from Ruskin the praise of

being "the best piece of existing criticism founded on the principles of Sir Joshua's school[1]."

Contemporaneously with the *Conversations of Northcote*, Benjamin Haydon (1786–1846), with a self-confidence half sublime, half grotesque, and a courage wholly admirable, was devoting himself to the task he had chosen as the work of his life, the elevation of the art of England. Ruskin declares that "nothing except disgrace and misguidance will ever be gathered from such work as that of Haydon[2]"; and unless a man is prepared to defy the great apostle of art, he must not rank Haydon as a painter. Nevertheless, if not in the paintings, then in the *Autobiography*, there remains an imperishable memorial of all that courage and self-devotion. No form of composition is rarer than a perfectly sincere autobiography, and none is more interesting when, once or twice in a hundred years, it is found. And such is the autobiography of Haydon. Benvenuto Cellini himself is not more naked and unashamed. Haydon is absolutely open just because he never dreams that there is anything to be ashamed of; and as, in point of fact, he was, in many respects, a man of rare nobility, the book in which his character is enshrined is one of surpassing interest. If it be true that he never with the brush painted a picture which deserved to live, he at least painted one with the pen. Some may find significance in the fact that two of the handful of great autobiographies are autobiographies of artists; but they must explain why it is that a third is that of Benjamin Franklin, the man of science, and a fourth that of Gibbon the historian, and that two others were written by Augustine the saint and by Rousseau the sinner. One more service of Haydon's deserves commemoration. He was the first to see the beauty of the Elgin Marbles. He studied them unweariedly when they lay neglected in a dirty pent-house in Park Lane, and it was largely through his ceaseless efforts that they were secured for the nation. As surely as Ruskin was the first of his time to recognise the greatness of Tintoret, so surely was Haydon the first professional artist to see and proclaim the matchless beauty of the Greek sculptures.

Whatever may be the defect of Haydon's work as a painter,

[1] *Præterita*, i. 327. [2] *Modern Painters*, v. 196.

there is no reason to lament that he did not devote himself to literature instead. It is not probable that he could have produced another consummate work like the *Autobiography*. That work shows, it is true, a powerful intellect, and its author might have written many vigorous and interesting books; but it presents no evidence of unusual literary skill. Its excellence consists in the portraiture of one man, Haydon himself. He had but one life to live, but one self to paint; and there, probably, his literary faculty in its highest phase began and ended. The reader can hardly even wish the poor painter success; for the less amiable qualities which are readily pardoned in a record of grim effort would be intolerable if they appeared as the self-sufficiency of a prosperous man.

Haydon is an example of a man who failed after mighty effort in one art, and achieved success, as it were by accident, in another. If he has won a name in literature, it is a thing he never purposed: what he wrote was meant to immortalise the painter, not the scribe; it was to turn the attention of men to the genius who imagined the Raising of Lazarus and the Judgment of Solomon; it was to do for Benjamin Robert Haydon what *Modern Painters* did for Turner. There were others who, like Haydon, tried both arts, and, unlike him, consciously and deliberately abandoned one for the other. Thackeray, because he could not draw, gave up the ambition to be an artist and became a novelist instead. Ruskin would have been an artist but for certain defects, in particular the lack of the power of design, of which he became conscious. In Rossetti, the gifts of painting and of poetry were almost equally developed; and attention has already been called to a similar blending of the two arts in many others of the Pre-Raphaelite group.

This conjunction of the arts, then, is a characteristic of the time. Nothing parallel to it is to be found in the eighteenth century; probably no relation so intimate could be pointed to at any time. It was not by accident that the conjunction showed itself just then. The spirit of romance had moved the whole emotional nature, and when the nature was complex and many-sided it inevitably sought various modes of expression. It is not extrava-

gantly fanciful to imagine a kinship between the word-visions of Shelley and the colour-visions of Turner. It was, perhaps, partly habit and tradition which kept the arts of the poet and the painter asunder in the case of these men. A generation later the tradition had lost much of its force, and the actual kinship of the arts was becoming more and more manifest. Men felt dimly what they have only in recent years come to realise clearly. Their hearts burned within them, they knew not why; but the power which made them burn was, under all its multifarious shapes, fundamentally the same. Classic and romantic in poetry, utilitarian and idealist in philosophy, evangelical and tractarian in religion, were all names indicating different aspects of one great opposition, the opposition of the spirit of the nineteenth century to the spirit of the eighteenth. The Bowles-Pope controversy has its analogue in the opposition, which is not a controversy, between the classical theories of Haydon and the Gothic ones of Ruskin.

"It is not possible," Ruskin writes, "that the classical spirit should ever take possession of a mind of the highest order[1]." Here the word "classical" is used in the sense which it bore in the eighteenth century. But even in presence of a grander classicism, Ruskin is comparatively cold. "I would not," he writes, "surrender, from an *architectural* point of view, one mighty line of the colossal, quiet, life-in-death statue mountains of Egypt with their narrow fixed eyes and hands on their rocky limbs, nor one Romanesque façade with its porphyry mosaic of indefinable monsters, nor one Gothic moulding of rigid saints and grinning goblins, for ten Parthenons[2]." The italics are Ruskin's; but when the fullest allowance is made for the qualification, the statement is sufficiently remarkable. It would be tedious and superfluous to quote his words of vituperation and contempt for the Renascence. It would be equally superfluous to demonstrate his admiration of the Gothic. No one knew better than he the crudity, the affectations and the inconsistencies of the early Gothic revival. He points them out in his favourite Scott himself: "He had some confused love of Gothic architecture, because it was dark, picturesque, old, and like nature; but could not tell the

[1] *Modern Painters*, v. 267. [2] *ibid.* ii. 219–220.

worst from the best, and built for himself perhaps the most incongruous and ugly pile that gentlemanly modernism ever designed; marking, in the most curious and subtle way, that mingling of reverence with irreverence which is so striking in the age; he reverences Melrose, yet casts one of its piscinas, puts a modern steel grate into it, and makes it his fire-place[1]." Yet such conceptions of Gothic, crude as they were, with the still cruder conceptions of Horace Walpole, were the necessary foundations for Ruskin's work.

"The first step," says Ruskin, "to the understanding either the mind or position of a great man ought, I think, to be an inquiry into the elements of his early instruction, and the mode in which he was affected by the circumstances of surrounding life." Such an inquiry is certainly fruitful in his own case; and in *Præterita* and *Fors Clavigera* we have ample materials, presented in attractive but characteristically garrulous fashion.

John Ruskin (1819–1900) was three-quarters Scotch by blood, and wholly evangelical Protestant by religious training. His father migrated to London as a clerk to a firm of wine merchants, on the dissolution of which he became himself head of a new firm which was founded to take its place. Through his paternal grandmother he was related to the Maitlands of Kenmore Castle and the Agnews of Lochnaw, and his great-grandmother had at one time had custody of that precious document, the National Covenant. John James Ruskin married his cousin, Margaret Cox. Their son, John Ruskin, was an only child. He was reared in the quietest of homes, and naturally its teaching sank deep into his nature. Superficially, at least, he seemed to be influenced more by his mother than by his father. She was rigidly evangelical, and she cherished the dream of making her son an evangelical clergyman. Both father and son acquiesced in the evangelicalism rather than shared it. "Though he went to church with a resigned countenance, I knew very well that he liked going just as little as I did[2]." The purpose of making young Ruskin an evangelical clergyman was frustrated by the still more rigid evangelicalism of an aunt, his father's sister, who gave him cold mutton for Sunday's dinner, "which—as I much preferred it

[1] *Modern Painters*, iii. 282. [2] *Præterita*, iii. 10.

hot—greatly diminished the influence of *The Pilgrim's Progress*[1]." Nevertheless, faith in the maternal doctrines was slow to decay, and their influence lasted for life. Sabbatarianism held the most enduring power. The father and son, on their foreign tours, indulged in walks on Sunday with unholy joy, dashed with a sense that they were children of perdition. Not till 1858 did Ruskin go so far as to draw on Sunday, "with a dimly alarmed sense of its being a new fact in existence[2]" for him. And he adds, "Come to pass how it might, the real new fact in existence for me was that my drawings did not prosper that year, and, in deepest sense, never prospered again." One is reminded of Scott's story of witchcraft in connexion with Laird Nippy, and his comment after its fulfilment in the bankruptcy of the Laird: "And now, think whatever we choose of it, my good friend Nippy is a bankrupt[3]." Lockhart evidently thought that Scott had a lingering half-belief in something "no canny" behind the story; and Ruskin's manner suggests a similar relic of belief in his case.

Probably by this teaching Mrs Ruskin was injuriously cramping and fettering her son's mind and life; but there can be no question as to the value of the unceasing training in the Bible which she gave him from the dawn of his intelligence till he went to Oxford. The method was as mechanical as possible. The mother and son began with the opening of Genesis and read steadily through, day by day, omitting nothing, till they reached the end of the Apocalypse; when they began over again. But the result was that Ruskin acquired a marvellous knowledge of the Bible, and that this supplies a backbone to his thought and style, which otherwise might have been fatally invertebrate.

As the sense of religion remained profound in Ruskin even after he had almost wholly discarded dogma, it is important to understand the ideas of religion which went to form his growing mind. But in the earlier and greater part of his career it was his destiny to be the apostle of the religion of beauty; and it is therefore not less important to understand how his sense of beauty

[1] *Præterita*, i. 2. [2] *ibid.* iii. 34.
[3] Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, ii. 187–188.

was awakened and nourished. This was mainly the work of his father, a person of greater intellectual power and of more varied gifts, though of less concentrated strength, than his mother. The son speaks of his father's "high natural powers, and exquisitely romantic sensibility[1]." Those powers were considerable enough to draw the attention of the Edinburgh philosopher, Thomas Brown, and to induce him to write with marked respect to the elder Ruskin. The romantic sensibility showed itself in a love of natural scenery, of paintings and drawings, and of romantic literature. Scott was a prime favourite; and the taste was transmitted from the father to the son. "I can no more recollect the time," says the latter, "when I did not know them [the Waverley Novels] than when I did not know the Bible[2]." Pope's *Homer* had been another book in which the boy delighted; and, a little later, Byron was added by the father, who also had an ambition for his gifted son. It was that he would "write poetry as good as Byron's, only pious[3]." There was nothing inconsistent between this and the mother's design to make him an evangelical clergyman; for another part of the father's dream was that his son should "preach sermons as good as Bossuet's, only Protestant." The father's pride in *Modern Painters* never quite reconciled him to the loss either of the verses or of the sermons. The gorgeous prose seemed to him scarcely equivalent to the poetry which was never written; and "he would have been a bishop[4]" was his sad remark to a friend, when contrasting what was with what might have been.

Under his father's guidance, then, Ruskin read the right books. It is also important to notice that, in the course of his business, the elder Ruskin showed the boy much of the finest scenery in England. The family custom was to take a coaching tour in the summer, combining business with pleasure, calling upon customers, and inspecting all noteworthy mansions and castles on the route. A little later, in 1833, Prout's *Sketches in Flanders and Germany* suggested a longer journey; and the tour to the Rhine and Switzerland was the first of many wanderings for pleasure only, or for pleasure and education combined. Thus the young

[1] *Præterita*, i. 127. [2] *ibid.* 43. [3] *ibid.* 284. [4] *ibid.* 20.

Ruskin gradually became familiar with the best Europe had to show both in nature and art, and much of his after work would have been impossible but for this training of eye and hand (for he drew diligently on his travels) in the knowledge and love of the beautiful.

Besides all this, the elder Ruskin possessed and transmitted to his son a keen and sensitive taste in art. Another man, his partner Telford, introduced young Ruskin to the work of Turner by the gift of the illustrated edition of Rogers's *Italy*; but it was the common joy of the father and son in Prout which suggested the tour just mentioned. In later days the two diverged in taste, but during Ruskin's period of growth he could count upon a singularly keen and delicate sympathy at home.

Fortunate in his home, Ruskin was no less fortunate in the time of his birth. "A very few years,—within the hundred,—before that, no child could have been born to care for mountains, or for the men that lived among them, in that way. Till Rousseau's time there had been no 'sentimental' love of nature; and till Scott's, no such apprehensive love of 'all sorts and conditions of men,' not in the soul merely, but in the flesh. St Bernard of La Fontaine, looking out to Mont Blanc with his child's eyes, sees above Mont Blanc the Madonna; St Bernard of Talloires, not the lake of Annecy, but the dead between Martigny and Aosta. But for me, the Alps and their people were alike beautiful in their snow, and their humanity; and I wanted, neither for them nor myself, sight of any thrones in heaven but the rocks, or of any spirits in heaven but the clouds[1]."

In 1837 Ruskin went into residence at Christ Church, Oxford. Hitherto his education had been wholly private, and its quality had been very uneven. As regards art, it could hardly have been improved; for besides the advantages already mentioned, the boy had had the benefit of lessons from Copley Fielding. In literature too it was excellent. His father, whom the son—himself a most accomplished reader—declares to have been "an absolutely beautiful reader of the *best* poetry and prose[2]," read aloud "all the Shakespeare comedies and historical plays again and again,

[1] *Præterita*, i. 164–165. [2] *ibid.* i. 79.

all Scott, and all Don Quixote." In respect of Greek he was less fortunate. Dr Andrews, in whose chapel in Walworth the Ruskin family worshipped, had a local reputation as a scholar, and Mr Ruskin thought he would be a fit and proper person to instruct his son in the classics. It proved that "he knew little more of Greek than the letters, and declensions of nouns[1]"; and though "he wrote the letters prettily," his instruction hardly tended to high scholarship in his pupil. Consequently, the young Ruskin carried to Oxford a mixture of knowledge and ignorance almost as puzzling as that of Gibbon. Already at eighteen he knew some things better, probably, than any man in England; of other things he was so ignorant that it was questionable whether he could pass his responsions. For unfortunately the things which Ruskin knew were things which did not count at Oxford, and the things of which he was ignorant were essential.

It is needless to dwell upon the life at Oxford. Intimate as was to be the connexion of Ruskin with the University, the influence of Oxford upon him was slight, and he never bore her stamp, as Newman did, and Arnold. It is not merely that his studies were other than the prescribed studies of the place: even the beauty of Oxford failed to impress him as it impressed her chosen sons. When in *Præterita* he names the "three centres of his life's thought," no one is surprised that Oxford is not one of them, though probably all feel, not merely surprise but astonishment that Venice and Florence are not named, and that all the work he did in the former city is described as "bye-work[2]." The three centres in question are Rouen, Geneva and Pisa. In Ruskin's own judgment therefore the vital part of his education was derived from those sojourns on the Continent to which reference has already been made.

They were periods not of idleness, nor of mere indulgence, but of strenuous though pleasurable work. It was only by this means that Ruskin could have amassed that knowledge of art in all its forms which is the ground-work of his great books, *Modern Painters*, *The Stones of Venice* and *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, as well as of the various courses of lectures, &c., by which in later days

[1] *Præterita*, i. 99. [2] *ibid.* i. 235.

he discharged his duties as Slade Professor. But all this time Ruskin was doing more than extend his knowledge of colours and forms, and of the use made of these in art. To him, art was always full of meaning, it expressed ideas, it was a part of life, and all life was a unity. "However mean or inconsiderable the act," he says truly and finely, "there is something in the well doing of it, which has fellowship with the noblest forms of manly virtue[1]." It is one of his foibles to see the meaning of every stone in a building, of every tint in a picture, of every twig on a tree; and a disciple's confidence in the master is somewhat shaken by the discovery that he is given to denying flatly what ten years before he had most confidently affirmed. But though Ruskin frequently carried his principles to excess, his faith that in all true art there is a meaning which may be expressed in words gives inexhaustible interest to his criticisms. It also made his study of art profoundly influential upon himself. There were no water-tight compartments in his mind. He could not disjoin his aesthetic sense from his moral nature; or rather, though he could, he held it wrong to do so. He objects to the identification of truth with beauty. "One," he says, "is a property of statements, the other of objects." While however they are separable, "it is wrong to separate them; they are to be sought together in the order of their worthiness; that is to say, truth first, and beauty afterwards. High art differs from low art in possessing an excess of beauty in addition to its truth, not in possessing excess of beauty inconsistent with truth[2]." Believing as he did that the scenes of nature, the pictures and the buildings which he studied and loved, became part of himself and modified that self, he could not possibly be indifferent to their moral aspect.

As Ruskin therefore brought the whole contents of his mind to bear upon his criticism, the question what his views were, not on art alone, but on everything, is strictly relevant to the interpretation of that criticism. And this is especially the case with regard to his deepest convictions. In an indispensable section of *Fors Clavigera* (Letter LXXVI.) Ruskin has reviewed his own

[1] *Seven Lamps*, Introd. 7. [2] *Modern Painters*, iii. 35 n.

spiritual history. He divides it into three parts. Up to 1858, it was, with him, Protestantism or nothing. Then he was "*un*-converted" by the sermon of "a little squeaking idiot" in a Waldensian chapel. He had previously discovered that "all beautiful prayers were Catholic,—all wise interpretations of the Bible Catholic;—and every manner of Protestant written services whatsoever either insolently altered corruptions, or washed-out and ground-down débris of the great Catholic collects, litanies, and songs of praise[1]." Yet he could not become a Catholic because he "no more believed in the living Pope than he did in the living Khan of Tartary[2]." For sixteen years, from 1858 to 1874, he lived "with 'the religion of humanity' for rough and strong and sure foundation of everything." Then came the final change, which made *Fors* "much more distinctly Christian in its tone." "I am myself much of a Turk, more of a Jew; alas, most of all,—an infidel; but not an atom of a heretic: Catholic I of the Catholics," is Ruskin's summing up about himself[3].

This summary of the development of Ruskin's religious beliefs has led us many years forwards. Retracing our steps, we find Ruskin's Oxford career interrupted in 1840 by a serious illness which forced him to go abroad, and so rather advanced than retarded his true education. In 1842 he at last went up for his degree. He entered only for a pass, and his Latin was so bad that his success was questionable; but bad Latin was forgiven for the sake of good divinity, philosophy and mathematics; and the examiners gave him "a complimentary double-fourth."

But the humble degree was soon to be rendered illustrious; for in the following year appeared *Modern Painters, by a Graduate of Oxford*, the first of the five volumes which were destined to fill a large part of the author's life till 1860. This volume was not Ruskin's earliest venture in authorship, though it was by far the most important and ambitious hitherto. From 1834 to 1836 various articles of his had appeared in the *Magazine of Natural History*; and between 1835 and 1844 he contributed a number of poems to *Friendship's Offering*, a periodical edited by Thomas

[1] *Præterita*, iii. 31. [2] *ibid.*
[3] *Fors Clavigera*, lxxvi.

Pringle, a minor but, within his limits, a genuine poet. These poetical efforts were continued for a year or two longer in *The Keepsake* and Heath's *Book of Beauty*; but Ruskin convinced himself, to his father's sorrow, that verse was not, for him, the proper medium of expression. Though his solitary academical success was the winning of the Newdigate prize in 1839 with the poem, *Salsette and Elephanta*, he gradually dropped metrical composition. Probably the most noteworthy writings of those early years were the series of articles begun in Loudon's *Architectural Magazine* in 1837, under the title of *Introduction to the Poetry of Architecture*, a subject which, as the author himself says, half his future life was to be spent in discoursing of.

All these writings were trifling compared with the volume which in 1843 roused universal curiosity about the anonymous author. The impulse to write it came from the deprecation of Turner by the school of art then reigning. Of "the two paths" concerning which Ruskin afterwards wrote, this reigning school took the path of convention; and then, as always, Ruskin was the panegyrist of natural art. Nothing that is natural can be ugly, nothing that is not natural can be beautiful, was his favourite dogma. While this gave the impulse, the power to write was largely due to Ruskin's familiarity with the drawings of Turner in the collection of Godfrey Windus, a retired coach-builder living at Tottenham. Of course Ruskin's own collection was then unformed: it was not till 1839 that the family got its second Turner drawing. Windus however was a collector, and his collection was always open to his fellow-enthusiast; for "nobody, in all England, at that time,—and Turner was already sixty,—*cared*, in the true sense of the word, for Turner, but the retired coachmaker of Tottenham, and I[1]." The common feeling with regard to the great painter was expressed by the article in *Blackwood's Magazine* which first stirred Ruskin to write a reply.

Upon this state of taste and feeling *Modern Painters* burst like a thunderclap. It riveted attention, and it astonished readers both by the novelty and the decision of the opinions expressed, and by the extraordinary eloquence of the language. Whoever

[1] *Præterita*, ii. 16–17.

the Graduate of Oxford might be, he was clearly not a person to be despised: the critic of art was himself an artist, at least in words. In all literature, there was no such word-painting as his: the colours were as dazzling as those of his favourite Turner himself. Take, for example, the great storm-picture from the Alban Mount:—"Not long ago, I was slowly descending this very bit of carriage-road, the first turn after you leave Albano, not a little impeded by the worthy successors of the ancient prototypes of Veiento. It had been wild weather when I left Rome, and all across the Campagna the clouds were sweeping in sulphurous blue, with a clap of thunder or two, and breaking gleams of sun along the Claudian aqueduct lighting up the infinity of its arches like the bridge of chaos. But as I climbed the long slope of the Alban Mount, the storm swept finally to the north, and the noble outlines of the domes of Albano, and graceful darkness of its ilex grove, rose against pure streaks of alternate blue and amber; the upper sky gradually flushing through the last fragments of rain-cloud in deep palpitating azure, half æther and half dew. The noonday sun came slanting down the rocky slopes of La Riccia, and their masses of entangled and tall foliage, whose autumnal tints were mixed with the wet verdure of a thousand evergreens, were penetrated with it as with rain. I cannot call it colour, it was conflagration. Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle, the rejoicing trees sank into the valley in showers of light, every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life; each, as it turned to reflect or to transmit the sunbeam, first a torch and then an emerald. Far up into the recesses of the valley, the green vistas arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea, with the arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks for foam, and silver flakes of orange spray tossed into the air around them, breaking over the grey walls of rock into a thousand separate stars, fading and kindling alternately as the weak wind lifted and let them fall. Every blade of grass burned like the golden floor of heaven, opening in sudden gleams as the foliage broke and closed above it, as sheet-lightning opens in a cloud at sunset; the motionless masses of dark rock—dark though flushed with

scarlet lichen, casting their quiet shadows across its restless radiance, the fountain underneath them filling its marble hollow with blue mist and fitful sound; and over all, the multitudinous bars of amber and rose, the sacred clouds that have no darkness, and only exist to illumine, were seen in fathomless intervals between the solemn and orbed repose of the stone pines, passing to lose themselves in the last, white, blinding lustre of the measureless line where the Campagna melted into the blaze of the sea[1]."

The style of Ruskin is unquestionably in great part the secret of his power. It would be superfluous to comment upon the magnificent eloquence: whatever could be effected by a gorgeous embroidery of words was evidently within the competence of the writer. The danger was rather that he might have been seduced into an excess of ornaments. A style of this sort is cloying, and the limpid simplicity of a page of Goldsmith is more universally and more permanently pleasing. But from the first Ruskin varied his majestic periods with piquant phrases and sly touches of humour; and, fortunately, the development of his style tended rather to simplicity than to increase of splendour. No one has been more severe than himself upon the excess and exaggeration into which this gift of expressive words occasionally led him. "See the mischief of fine writing," is his own comment in a note upon a passage in the second volume of *Modern Painters*, and its substance is repeated many times in his works. No one was ever more frank in self-criticism, and even in self-contradiction. Both as to style and as to substance he pours out the vials of wrath no less copiously upon himself than upon others.

The success of the first volume of *Modern Painters* fixed the career of Ruskin. The vision of the evangelical clergyman faded from before his mother's eyes, and that of the poet writing verse as good as Byron's, only pious, ceased to delight his father. They listened even with tears to the reading of the finer passages of *Modern Painters* in manuscript; yet they were never fully reconciled to the new mode of life. The education of foreign travel and art study went on as before. In 1844 Ruskin was in

[1] *Modern Painters*, i. 164–166.

Switzerland, in 1845 in Italy, and again in 1846 we find him back at his beloved Chamouni. In that year the second volume of *Modern Painters* appeared. The press notices, says the author, were "either cautious or complimentary,—none, to the best of my memory, contemptuous[1]." No one will wonder: there would have been ground for surprise had it been otherwise. For in the interval the second edition of the first volume had been published, and it contained a new preface, in which the critics were vigorously dealt with. Most of them are passed over in comprehensive contempt; but the *Blackwood* critic is singled out for special honour. It may be doubted whether he enjoyed it much:—"Writers like the present critic of *Blackwood's Magazine* deserve more respect; the respect due to honest, hopeless, helpless imbecility. There is something exalted in the innocence of their feeblemindedness; one cannot suspect them of partiality, for it implies feeling; nor of prejudice, for it implies some previous acquaintance with their subject. I do not know that, even in this age of charlatanry, I could point to a more barefaced instance of imposture on the simplicity of the public, than the insertion of those pieces of criticism in a respectable periodical. We are not so insulted with opinions on music from persons ignorant of its notes; nor with treatises on philology by persons unacquainted with the alphabet; but here is page after page of criticism, which one may read from end to end, looking for something which the writer knows, and finding nothing,"—and so on. Evidently the Graduate of Oxford was very well able to take care of himself, and the critics were wise in showing respect for his teeth and claws.

Ten years passed before the next two volumes of *Modern Painters* were published, and yet four after that before it was ended, not "concluded," by the publication of the fifth and last volume in 1860. No wonder the author's father feared he would be dead before it was done. But the delay was due to no lack of industry. The cause lay in the discursiveness of the author's mind, the width of his sympathies, and his passion for thoroughness when he was roused to interest. *Modern Painters* alone would

[1] *Præterita*, ii. 286.

have been no mean achievement even for a period so long as seventeen years. But it was far from being the only production of those years. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) was "thrown together during the preparation of one of the sections of *Modern Painters*[1]." *The Stones of Venice* (1851–1853) was also a bye-work. And there were many things in addition of less importance,—*Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds* (1851), *Pre-Raphaelitism* (1851), *Lectures on Architecture and Painting* (1854), *The Political Economy of Art* (1857), *The Two Paths* (1859), &c.

To the year 1860 belong not only the concluding volume of *Modern Painters*, but also *Unto this Last* (as a separate volume, 1862). It is the point of separation between the two great branches of Ruskin's work. After 1860 Ruskin the art critic lived on, it is true; and as Slade Professor there still remained for him much work, both brilliant and solid, to do. But this work mainly illustrated in detail, or reiterated, the principles the author had already laid down. There are no more books of art-criticism on the great scale. On the other hand, Ruskin the Social Reformer, with all his fervour, his high aims, his unselfishness, his keen insight and his astonishing blindness, his wisdom and his perversity, emerged into view. It would be a profound mistake to look upon this interest in social reform as something new: all that is new is the prominence given to it. There is no real break anywhere in the life of Ruskin; it is a continuous development, partly concealed by the superficial contradictions of a whimsical, self-willed and arrogantly self-confident nature,—the nature with which he was born, and which was nourished by his solitary education.

There are few important points connected with the work of Ruskin about which mistakes are more frequently made than about this. Ruskin the art critic is looked upon as a different man from Ruskin the social reformer. The truth is that the social reformer was latent in his character from the first. In 1860 his work for art was in its great outlines done; and his restless intellectual energy forced him into the other field. The

[1] Preface to *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*.

organic connexion between the two phases is evident if we consider only the importance of the moral element in Ruskin's criticisms. But there are many indications more specific than this. Take, for example, this passage from *The Seven Lamps*:—"We have just spent, for instance, a hundred and fifty millions, with which we have paid men for digging ground from one place and depositing it in another. We have formed a large class of men, the railway navvies, especially reckless, unmanageable, and dangerous. We have maintained besides (let us state the benefits as fairly as possible) a number of ironfounders in an unhealthy and painful employment; we have developed (this at least is good) a very large amount of mechanical ingenuity; and we have, in fine, attained the power of going fast from one place to another. Meantime we have had no mental interest or concern ourselves in the operations we have set on foot, but have been left to the usual vanities and cares of our existence. Suppose, on the other hand, that we had employed the same sums in building beautiful houses and churches. We should have maintained the same number of men, not in driving wheelbarrows, but in a distinctly technical, if not intellectual employment; and those who were more intelligent among them would have been especially happy in that employment, as having room in it for the development of their fancy, and being directed by it to that observation of beauty which, associated with the pursuit of natural science, at present forms the enjoyment of many of the more intelligent manufacturing operatives. Of mechanical ingenuity, there is, I imagine, at least as much required to build a cathedral as to cut a tunnel or contrive a locomotive: we should, therefore, have developed as much science, while the artistical element of intellect would have been added to the gain. Meantime we should ourselves have been much happier and wiser by the interest we should have taken in the work with which we were personally concerned; and when all was done, instead of the very doubtful advantage of the power of going fast from place to place, we should have had the certain advantage of increased pleasure in stopping at home[1]." Are not the germs both of the truths and of the fallacies of the

[1] *Seven Lamps: Lamp of Obedience.*

economic and social teaching of Ruskin present here? In 1849 the thoughts were in his mind, and only time and the impulse were needed.

The economical and social essays, lectures and pamphlets, were the outcome of that 'religion of humanity' which was Ruskin's chief stay for sixteen years. The development is perfectly natural; but it was much helped by the intimacy which grew up between Ruskin and Carlyle, whom Ruskin loved in latter days to call his "master," and whom he read so constantly as to find himself "perpetually falling into his modes of expression[1]." This influence increased greatly after 1850, when the personal acquaintance between the two men became intimate; and in Ruskin's views of the condition of England, in his contempt for the existing political economy and for John Stuart Mill as its apostle, in the principles of the political economy which he wished to substitute for that, in his Toryism and his Radicalism, in his sympathy with the people and his faith in the leadership of the Hero or King, we see innumerable traces of Carlyle's teaching.

Ruskin was "ever a fighter." His youth had been spent in the battle against conventionalism in art; in his prime he began a battle against orthodoxy in political economy. The latter was far the more formidable affair of the two. The critics of art had been speedily reduced to "caution"; the economists were not so easily silenced or overawed. They were numerous, and they were in possession of the field. *Unto this Last* first appeared in the form of essays in *The Cornhill Magazine*, then edited by Ruskin's friend Thackeray. The outcry was so great that after three papers had been printed Thackeray had the painful task of writing that he could admit only one more. Opposition made Ruskin more dogmatic and determined. "After turning the matter hither and thither in my mind for two years more, I resolved to make it the central work of my life to write an exhaustive treatise on Political Economy[2]." Another friend in the editorial chair, Froude, who was then conducting *Fraser's Magazine*, thought he might risk publishing the unpopular principles, not-

[1] *Modern Painters*, Appendix iii.

[2] *Munera Pulveris*, Preface, xxviii.

withstanding the experience of Thackeray. Ruskin accordingly sent him the preface of the projected work. It was printed in four articles in the years 1862 and 1863; and then once more the author had to be informed that it must be discontinued. These articles were afterwards published together under the name *Munera Pulveris*, the title chosen for the larger work which was never written.

But though the systematic treatise remains unwritten, the most important of Ruskin's later works are devoted to the exposition and expansion and practical application of the principles laid down in the essays contributed to *The Cornhill* and to *Fraser's Magazine*. *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866) works out certain fundamental principles of labour, commerce and war. *Time and Tide* (1867), in the shape of a series of letters to a working man, develops with greater freedom the principles laid down in *Munera Pulveris*, considering them in their social rather than in their purely economic aspect. And of course the long series of letters entitled *Fors Clavigera*, which ran on with some breaks from 1871 to 1884, had for its principal purpose the enforcement and the illustration of the author's economic and social ideas. *Sesame and Lilies* (1865) is informed with the same spirit, which likewise pervades the greater part even of the art work done in connexion with the Slade professorship. Ruskin's own classification of his works is instructive, though the divisions must not be too rigidly insisted upon:—"*Modern Painters*," he says, "taught the claim of all lower nature on the hearts of men; of the rock, and wave, and herb, as a part of their necessary spirit life; in all that I now bid you to do, to dress the earth and keep it, I am fulfilling what I then began. *The Stones of Venice* taught the laws of constructive Art, and the dependence of all human work or edifice, for its beauty, on the happy life of the workman. *Unto this Last* taught the laws of that life itself, and its dependence on the Sun of Justice: the Inaugural Oxford lectures, the necessity that it should be led, and the gracious laws of beauty and labour recognized, by the upper, no less than the lower, classes of England; and lastly *Fors Clavigera* has declared the relation of these to each other, and the only possible

conditions of peace and honour, for low and high, rich and poor, together, in the holding of that first Estate, under the only Despot, God, from which whoso falls, angel or man, is kept, not mythically nor disputably, but here in visible horror of chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day: and in keeping which service is perfect freedom, and inheritance of all that a loving Creator can give to His creatures, and an immortal Father to His children[1]."

The events of later life seldom have that spiritual importance which frequently belongs to the history of youth. The man is formed, and he can neither be un-formed nor re-formed. There is however one event in Ruskin's middle life which cannot be passed over. In 1869 he was elected Slade professor of art at Oxford, and in February, 1870, he delivered his inaugural lecture in the Sheldonian Theatre, whither he was forced to adjourn because the crowd was too great for the Museum, the place originally designated for the lecture. Between that date and 1877 Ruskin delivered at Oxford numerous courses of lectures. His final tenure of the Slade professorship in 1883 and 1884 produced two more courses, *The Art of England* and *The Pleasures of England*; the latter of which was, through the influence of friends, stopped before it was completed.

A large number of Ruskin's later works were either originally lectures delivered by him as Slade professor of fine art, or they originated from what he conceived to be the indirect duties of the professorship. To the former class belong *Aratra Pentelici* (1872), a course of lectures on sculpture which he delivered in 1870; *The Eagle's Nest* (1872), a discussion of the relation between art and science; *Ariadne Florentina* (1873), which treats of engraving on wood and metal; and *Val d'Arno* (1874), a study of Tuscan art. To this class too belong the *Lectures on Art* (1870); and they are the most important of all, because they give the best and most compendious view of Ruskin's principles of art as he held them in later years. Among the writings indirectly connected with his chair are *Mornings in Florence*

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, lxxviii.

(1875–77), *St Mark's Rest* (1877–84) and *The Bible of Amiens* (1880–85), all written with the purpose of teaching travellers what to admire in those shrines of art.

It might seem on the surface as if Ruskin had forgotten the economic interests of the decade 1860–1870, and gone back to his original love of art. In reality, there was no abandonment and no reversion. The love of art had never ceased, and the interest in social and economic problems had always been present. Rather, after 1870, we find a more perfect fusion of them, so long as Ruskin's mind retained its full power. The spirit of the art-teaching of this period is forecast in the first course of lectures at Oxford, where Ruskin calls upon the young men of England to make their country a source of light to the whole world, a temple of peace, the mistress of the sciences and the arts. On the other hand, the continuance of his social interests is amply attested by many of his public activities. Indeed, while he was less occupied than in the preceding decade with purely economic problems, he was more than ever devoted heart and soul to moral and social questions. Occasionally the manifestations of his interest were a little grotesque. The making of the road at Hinksey was somewhat eccentric. The Guild of St George, established in 1871, absorbed a great deal of Ruskin's time and energy; and its results have scarcely conduced to the acceptance of his theories. The agricultural experiments have been no more successful than was their American precursor, Brook Farm; and though the industrial experiments have in a few cases succeeded, they give little promise of a regeneration of society.

At the same time, that extraordinary series of letters, *Fors Clavigera*, was running its course. It contains many passages of great wisdom as well as beauty; but it exhibits in an exaggerated form most of the author's defects, and here and there in the latter part it bears traces of a mind unhinged. Ruskin was, in truth, dangerously overworking himself during those years, and he paid the penalty in the breakdown in 1878. He recovered, but never so far as to regain the full force of his intelligence. The interesting *Præterita*, which in some passages shows all the old beauty of style, was written subsequently; but

the garrulity which marks it is not wholly due to its autobiographical character: it is a symptom also of lessened force. Ruskin was then in the third of the periods which he regarded as the normal divisions of men's lives. "Note these three great divisions—essentially those of all men's lives, but singularly separate in his [Scott's],—the days of youth, of labour, and of death. Youth is properly the forming time—that in which a man makes himself, or is made, what he is for ever to be. Then comes the time of labour, when, having become the best he can be, he does the best he can do. Then the time of death, which, in happy lives, is very short: but always a *time*. The ceasing to breathe is only the end of death[1]." As Ruskin's French critic, M. Bardoux, points out, this last happiness was not his. The "jours de mort" extended far beyond even the seven years which he assigned to Scott.

This sketch of the life and work of Ruskin sufficiently explains the two divergent views which have been taken of him, and the modes of treatment to which he has been subjected. One writer looks upon him as primarily and principally a teacher of aesthetics; to another he is above all a moralist and social reformer. In France, the foreign country in which Ruskin has been most influential and most closely studied, the former view prevails. For many years it prevailed in England too; and long after Ruskin had begun to write on political economy, what he said on that subject was regarded as not much more than a vagary of an eccentric man of genius. Latterly the tendency has been to regard the ethical and social phases in Ruskin's work as fundamental, and to look upon the aesthetic element as only secondary and derivative. Both views are partly true, but they have to be united before we get the full truth. The later English view is that which most accurately represents Ruskin as he was in himself; the French and the early English view best indicates his place in literature. *Modern Painters* remains not only his largest, but, vehemently as he would have denied it, his greatest work. This book, *The Stones of Venice*, *The Seven Lamps* and the *Lectures on Art*, are likely to be longer

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, lxxxii.

remembered than *Unto this Last* (which Ruskin himself preferred to all his other writings), *Munera Pulveris* and *Fors Clavigera*.

In the aesthetic theory, or, more accurately, in the aesthetic *feeling* of Ruskin, nothing is more remarkable than the controlling influence of the spirit of mediævalism. He might be called the Newman of the aesthetic movement. Like Newman, he was repelled by the pure rationalism of the eighteenth century. To him, as to Newman, mediæval times were not the dark ages, but the bright ages. He did in art a work similar in kind to that which Newman was busy doing in religion. At first he did it unconsciously and unwittingly. As late as 1851 he received comfort from the confession of Protestant faith by the Pre-Raphaelites, though he was by that time already shaken in the faith himself. In truth, it was from the first external to him, something he had been taught, something which never became part of himself. In the second volume of *Modern Painters* we see this in the contrast he draws between Christian art and Greek art. He holds it for certain that shortcoming must "be visible in every Pagan conception, when set beside Christian." Not only so, but there is such difference of kind "as to make all Greek conception full of danger to the student in proportion to his admiration of it"; and he points to the fatal effect of its "pernicious element" on the "solemn purity" of the Italian schools. "The Greek could not conceive a spirit; he could do nothing without limbs; his God is a finite God, talking, pursuing, and going journeys; if at any time he was touched with a true feeling of the unseen powers around him, it was in the field of poised battle; for there is something in the near coming of the shadow of death, something in the devoted fulfilment of mortal duty, that reveals the real God, though darkly. That pause on the field of Platæa was not one of vain superstition; the two white figures that blazed along the Delphic plain, when the earthquake and the fire led the charge from Olympus, were more than sunbeams on the battle dust; the sacred cloud, with its lance light and triumph singing, that went down to brood over the masts at Salamis, was more than morning mist among the olives; and

yet what were the Greek's thoughts of his God of Battle? No spirit power was in the vision: it was a being of clay strength, and human passion, foul, fierce, and changeful; of penetrable arms, and vulnerable flesh. Gather what we may of great from Pagan chisel or Pagan dream, and set it beside the orderer of Christian warfare, Michael the Archangel: not Milton's 'with hostile brow and visage all inflamed'; not even Milton's in kingly treading of the hills of Paradise; not Raffaelle's with the expanded wings and brandished spear; but Perugino's with his triple crest of traceless plume unshaken in heaven, his hand fallen on his crossleted sword, the truth girdle binding his undinted armour; God has put His power upon him; resistless radiance is on his limbs; no lines are there of earthly strength, no trace on the divine features of earthly anger; trustful, and thoughtful, fearless, but full of love, incapable except of the repose of eternal conquest, vessel and instrument of Omnipotence, filled like a cloud with the victor light, the dust of principalities and powers beneath his feet, the murmur of hell against him heard by his spiritual ear like the winding of a shell on the far off sea shore[1]."

At this period, as we have seen in an earlier part of this book, there was the same division between mysticism and rationalism in the thought of England as that which prevailed in Greece in the sixth century B.C. Ruskin essayed to play the part of Pythagoras, and to combine the religious and the philosophic movements. Notwithstanding his early Protestantism and his later freedom from dogma, the above passage indicates in which scale his weight would tell. "In such unions," says Professor Bury, "the mystic element always wins the preponderance." In the case of Ruskin it certainly did so in that curious 'Catholicism' which was his final faith. Already in 1846 we see in the passage just quoted the trend of his mind; in 1851 it is more manifest in the grotesque "excommunication" of the *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds*; and in 1877 we see the final stage, when he speaks of "the magnificent cheat which the Devil played on the Protestant sect, from Knox downwards," which was

[1] *Modern Painters*, ii. 237–238.

"the consummation of his great victory over the Christian Church, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries[1]."

Manifestly, the path of Ruskin lies parallel to that of Newman. The starting-point is different, and the goal is different; but movement in both cases is in the same direction. Read "liberal" for "Greek" in the passage quoted above from *Modern Painters*, and translate the language of art into that of theology, and we have in effect this passage from the *Apologia*:—

"The Evangelical party itself, with their late successes, seemed to have lost that simplicity and unworldliness which I admired so much in Milner and Scott. It was not that I did not venerate such a man as Ryder, the then Bishop of Lichfield, and others of similar sentiments, who were not yet promoted out of the ranks of the Clergy, but I thought little of the Evangelicals as a class. I thought they played into the hands of the Liberals. With the Establishment thus divided and threatened, thus ignorant of its true strength, I compared that fresh vigorous Power of which I was reading in the first centuries. In her triumphant zeal on behalf of that Primeval Mystery, to which I had had so great a devotion from my youth, I recognized the movement of my Spiritual Mother. 'Incessu patuit Dea.' The self-conquest of her Ascetics, the patience of her Martyrs, the irresistible determination of her Bishops, the joyous swing of her advance, both exalted and abashed me. I said to myself, 'Look on this picture and on that'; I felt affection for my own Church, but not tenderness; I felt dismay at her prospects, anger and scorn at her do-nothing perplexity. I thought that if Liberalism once got a footing within her, it was sure of the victory in the event. I saw that Reformation principles were powerless to rescue her. As to leaving her, the thought never crossed my imagination; still I ever kept before me that there was something greater than the Established Church, and that that was the Church Catholic and Apostolic, set up from the beginning, of which she was but the local presence and the organ. She was nothing, unless she was this. She must be dealt with strongly, or she would be lost. There was need of a second reformation."

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, lxxxii., n.

Ruskin was unconscious of the parallelism; but he was never tired of moralising, or of making religious, art and that nature on which healthy art is based. It is true, he declares that the love of nature is a separate thing from moral principle, but he maintains that it is inconsistent with evil passions. He sees a connexion—though he admits exceptions—between things innocent and things brightly coloured. He especially associates nature with humanity. The famous passage on the Jura in *The Seven Lamps* is an assertion of this intimate association; and we find the same doctrine in many another passage. Mountains, he maintains, mould character and implant religion; and indeed this is true of the love of nature in all her forms. "Supposing all circumstances otherwise the same with respect to two individuals, the one who loves nature most will be *always* found to have more *faith in God* than the other[1]."

If nature appeals to men and forms character, the things which men have made must inevitably express character. The painters whom Ruskin judges are ranked higher or lower according to the ethical qualities their works express. Turner is exalted for his truth, Claude abased for falsity. Religion is the source of Giotto's strength; irreligion is the weakness of Titian. It is, Ruskin tells us, a characteristic of the great school of art that it "introduces in the conception of its subject as much beauty as is possible, consistently with truth." But "the corruption of the schools of high art...consists in the sacrifice of truth to beauty. Great art dwells on all that is beautiful; but false art omits or changes all that is ugly. Great art accepts Nature as she is, but directs the eyes and thoughts to what is most perfect in her; false art saves itself the trouble of direction by removing or altering whatever it thinks objectionable[2]."

So too when Ruskin turns to architecture, it is moral or religious qualities for the evidence of which he seeks in the stones. The very titles of the chapters of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* bear witness to this. The "lamps" are the lamps of Sacrifice, of Truth, of Power, of Beauty, of Life, of Memory, of Obedience.

[1] *Modern Painters*, iii. 317. The italics are Ruskin's.
[2] *Modern Painters*, iii. 36–37.

The Stones of Venice everywhere bears similar evidence. In the comparison between the fourteenth and fifteenth century work on the Ducal Palace, the point upon which most stress is laid is the difference between the figure of Hope on the ninth capital and its imitation on the twenty-ninth. On the earlier, "Hope is praying, while above her a hand is seen emerging from sunbeams —the hand of God (according to that of Revelation, 'The Lord giveth them light'); and the inscription above is 'Spes optima in Deo.'" On the later capital, "she is still praying, but she is praying to the sun only; *The hand of God is gone*[1]." And the same conception is expressed in more general terms where Ruskin notes the effect of the rise of the Renascence spirit, "the change to which London owes St Paul's, Rome St Peter's, Venice and Vicenza the edifices commonly supposed to be their noblest, and Europe in general the degradation of every art she has since practised."

"This change," he goes on, "appears first in a loss of truth and vitality in existing architecture all over the world....All the Gothics in existence, southern or northern, were corrupted at once: the German and French lost themselves in every species of extravagance; the English Gothic was confined, in its insanity, by a strait-waistcoat of perpendicular lines; the Italian effloresced on the mainland into the meaningless ornamentation of the Certosa of Pavia and the Cathedral of Como (a style sometimes ignorantly called Italian Gothic), and at Venice into the insipid confusion of the Porta della Carta and wild crockets of St Mark's. This corruption of all architecture, especially ecclesiastical, corresponded with, and marked, the state of religion over all Europe,—the peculiar degradation of the Romanist superstition, and of public morality in consequence, which brought about the Reformation[2]." In short, the statement in *The Crown of Wild Olive* is no exaggeration:—"*The Stones of Venice* had, from beginning to end, no other aim than to show that this Gothic architecture of Venice had arisen out of, and indicated in all its features, a state of pure national faith and of domestic virtue;

[1] *Stones of Venice: The Quarry*, xlviii. The italics are Ruskin's.

[2] *ibid.* xxxv.

and that its Renaissance architecture had arisen out of, and in all its features indicated, a state of concealed national infidelity and of domestic corruption."

It is necessary to dwell on these points, for in them we see the true unity of Ruskin's work. There is no sharp break at *Unto this Last*, only a development. The emphasis which has lain upon Beauty passes to Truth. We look more frequently beneath the symbol to the thing symbolised. It is necessary also, because here we find the central significance of Ruskin's art-criticism. He is no preacher of 'art for art's sake'; it is rather 'art for the use of man and the glory of God.' This is indeed, in Ruskin's conception, the true aim of all human action and not of art only. He expressed the latter part of it in the opening chapter of the second volume of *Modern Painters* in a manner which startled some of his readers south of the Tweed, though it was familiar enough to the dwellers north of the river; for it is suggested by, and the very phraseology is closely imitated from, the Shorter Catechism. "Man's use and function...are, to be the witness of the glory of God, and to advance that glory by his reasonable obedience and resultant happiness." The former part had already found expression more than once in the first volume. His praise of art is not measured by its technical perfection, but by its power of conveying ideas; and ideas in their turn are valuable in proportion as they tend to develop the noblest faculties. "The art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas; and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received[1]." Ruskin did not yet pause to investigate the idea of utility; but when in later years he did so, it is just in such a service as this that he finds true utility.

At the start, Ruskin contemplated a systematic treatment of the question of aesthetics. In the first volume of *Modern Painters* he discriminates between the ideas of power, of imitation, of truth, of beauty and of relation which can be received from

[1] *Modern Painters*, i. 12–13.

works of art, and declares his intention of investigating especially the three last. The plan is followed, though discursively, in the first volume, and also, though still less strictly, in the second; but in the third it is specifically renounced. "I do not intend now," he says, "to pursue the inquiry in a method so laboriously systematic; for the subject may, it seems to me, be more usefully treated by pursuing the different questions which arise out of it just as they occur to us, without too great scrupulousness in marking connections, or insisting on sequences. Much time is wasted by human beings, in general, on establishment of systems; and it often takes more labour to master the intricacies of an artificial connection, than to remember the separate facts which are so carefully connected[1]." In the interval of ten years between the second and the third volumes Ruskin had discovered the "harmfulness" of philosophy; but probably both the discovery itself and the abandonment of system were due to the growing conviction that the discursiveness which had characterised him from the start was a necessity of his nature. His criticism of art, therefore, is essentially unsystematic. One thing suggests another. He turns aside to formulate the principles of architecture and to investigate the great buildings of Venice; and he weaves in with these self-imposed tasks principles of literary criticism, of morals and of religion. The same is true still more emphatically of the later courses of lectures, in which we find a hotch-potch of the thought and emotion of Ruskin.

It was most fortunate for Ruskin that he did thus abandon system. It is where he is most systematic that he is most perverse, and that he falls into the most glaring blunders. Where he follows his own fine taste and feeling he is usually right; where he is supporting a theory or formulating a definition he is capable of being most egregiously wrong. In all literature there is hardly a greater absurdity than his definition of architecture. "It is very necessary," he says, "in the outset of all inquiry, to distinguish carefully between Architecture and Building[2]." And he proceeds to do so with amazing results. Architecture as a fine art, it seems, is "that art which, taking up and admitting, as

[1] *Modern Painters*, iii. 2. [2] *Seven Lamps*.

conditions of its working, the necessities and common uses of the building, impresses on its form certain characters venerable or beautiful, but otherwise unnecessary." "Thus, I suppose," he goes on, "no one would call the laws architectural which determine the height of a breastwork or the position of a bastion. But if to the stone facing of that bastion be added an unnecessary feature, as a cable moulding, *that* is architecture. It would be simply unreasonable to call battlements or machicolations architectural features, so long as they consist only of an advanced gallery supported on projected masses, with open intervals beneath for offence. But if these projecting masses be carved beneath into rounded courses, which are useless, and if the headings of the intervals be arched and trefoiled, which is useless, *that* is Architecture[1]."

In *The Republic* Socrates shows that, on the principles of Polemarchus, justice is useful only where money is useless, and he rightly regards this as a *reductio ad absurdum*. The unsophisticated man must be content to be "simply unreasonable," and to go on feeling that architecture is all the greater architecture and all the more nobly a "fine art" if it produces its effect without the added grace of something useless. And that it can do so is obvious. It would be "simply unreasonable" to pretend that the bastion depends for its effect upon the useless cable moulding more than upon the battlements or machicolations. But we may appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober. If it be true of art in general that "that art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas," then surely it is true of architecture. If useless ornament be the test of architecture, many modern buildings are smothered with it, and modern architecture must be surpassingly great. The laying down of principles of this sort is positively mischievous, for it encourages effort of the wrong sort and distracts attention from what is important and vital.

In matters of detail Ruskin is seldom as far astray as he is in this matter of fundamental principle; yet he is not infrequently wrong-headed. His foible is omniscience; and it is often difficult

[1] *Seven Lamps: The Lamp of Sacrifice.*

to believe that he has penetrated the mind of the artist as thoroughly as his criticisms would imply. Further, when he once takes the wrong road he follows it to the end. His colours are strong: the wholly admirable on the one hand is too often opposed to the wholly vile on the other. He is an advocate: the contrast of Claude with Turner is unfair to the former. When he once sets out to find faults he finds them everywhere; when it suits him to point out merit, everything is a virtue. Except where he is sympathetic he is a very unsafe guide. Sometimes he would seem to have founded his judgment upon the first of a man's works which he happened to come across, and never to have overcome the prepossession, whether favourable or adverse, so created. Sheer caprice is probably the cause of many of his self-contradictions. But account must be taken also of a curious limitation of his power of comprehension. He concentrated so long and so intensely on the study of inanimate nature that he failed to develop the capacity (if indeed he possessed it in germ) for an equal understanding of life. There is truth in the judgment of the great painter Watts: "The higher the art, the less he [Ruskin] seemed capable of comprehending it. He had no sympathy with the human or divine; and was incapable of appreciating either Michael Angelo or Titian[1]." And yet he was of opinion that "the intense love of nature is, in modern times, characteristic of persons not of the first order of intellect, but of brilliant imagination, quick sympathy, and undefined religious principle, suffering also usually under strong and ill-governed passions[2]"; and he would have explained the preponderance of nature in his own work (supposing him to have admitted it) as due to his weaknesses.

Ruskin figures in literature primarily as a critic of painting and architecture, but he was also a ready and a skilful critic of literature; and though his literary criticisms are sporadic and unsystematic, they are among the most important since the death of Lamb. His opinions on Homer, on Shakespeare and on Scott are expressed as freely and as frequently as his opinions on any artist, with the exception of Turner. They are based upon

[1] *Life of Jowett*, ii. 109. [2] *Modern Painters*, iii. 303.

the same principle, and they are less important only because Ruskin was not in this department a pioneer. The core of his criticism, in literature as in art, is the principle of Naturalism. He interrogates both painter and poet in order to discover how far each interprets (not necessarily imitates) nature; and so he is himself, above and beyond all, an interpreter of nature. "The more I think of it," he says, "I find this conclusion more impressed upon me,—that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to *see* something, and tell what it *saw* in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion,—all in one[1]." To this test therefore he is constantly bringing all the writers whom he touches upon, just as it is by this test that he tries Turner and Claude. So too he is continually gibing at German philosophy, because he thinks it has let go the guiding thread of naturalism. In naturalism also lie the roots of the doctrine of the "pathetic fallacy"; and the sense that he is the apostle of nature repeatedly tempts Ruskin, poetic and imaginative as his own mind is, to the verge of literalism. Even his favourites incur censure if they forget the relation of humble subjection in which they stand to nature. One of those favourites, he says, had "a vague notion that Nature would not be able to get on well without Wordsworth[2]"; and he thinks the worse of the poet for it.

Naturalism was no new thing in poetry when Ruskin adopted it as the principle of his criticism. There lay behind him two generations of poetry imbued with this spirit, and he was enabled to analyse it, to set it in its place, to assign its limits and to determine the conditions of its validity. This is his principal service to criticism; and his deliberate effort to turn away the English mind from what he believed to be its excessive addiction to German thought is only another aspect of it. But it deserves special mention, because it indicates a new trend of criticism. Under Coleridge and Carlyle, criticism had looked towards Germany; under Ruskin, it looks away from Germany with her idealistic philosophy to nature herself; under Arnold, the gaze is

[1] *Modern Painters*, iii. 278. [2] *ibid.* iii. 287.

turned towards France, as the country which, by reason of the very differences between her and us, can best supply our deficiencies.

The thing *seen* however, on which Ruskin lays stress, must be interpreted to include the object of the mental, as well as that of the bodily, eye. It means a respect and reverence for fact of any sort, or for truth, and is opposed to empty fancies or to "imaginations as one would," whether they be found in the idealistic dreams of German philosophy, or in those attributions of human feeling to inanimate nature which are characteristic of modern poetry. To the highest order of mind as well as to the lowest, "a primrose by the river's brim" is just a primrose. Intermediate stands "the man who perceives wrongly, because he feels, and to whom the primrose is anything else than a primrose: a star, or a sun, or a fairy's shield, or a forsaken maiden[1]."

Ruskin shows wonderful fertility in the application of his critical principles. The literary illustration wells up from the rich stores of his mind while he is laying down the laws of art, or fulminating against those of political economy, or advising the workmen or the maidens of England, or reviewing the facts of his own life; and in most cases the criticism is enriched and made more suggestive by the context in which it is placed. Yet a plausible case could easily be made out for pronouncing it worthless. To criticise means to judge; and few men have been more wilful and capricious in judgment than Ruskin. He was full of prejudice. Though his sympathies were fairly wide, they were not all-embracing, and outside their range he was untrustworthy. He was too completely a man of his own age to be just to the eighteenth century; for when he was at the zenith of his powers, that century was at the nadir of its reputation. That excessive self-confidence which is a feature of his criticism of art mars his criticism of literature also. Highly as he valued reverence, it is to be feared that he sometimes forgot it. No shadow of doubt disturbs him: the meaning is what he says it is, and ought to be what he goes on to indicate. And yet it would not infrequently be possible to suggest very plausible criticisms in a sense exactly contrary to his.

[1] *Modern Painters*, iii. 168.

But though to criticise is to judge, it sometimes proves that an erroneous judgment is more helpful than a correct one. "Errare mehercule malo cum Platone quam cum istis vera sentire," is not the expression of an insane devotion to authority; it rather implies the conviction that the great man is "always profitable company." And so it is with Ruskin's criticisms. We may question the doctrine of the "pathetic fallacy," and point out inconsistencies in the author's treatment of it. We may think his praise of Scott excessive and his appreciation of Shelley inadequate. We may think the colours lurid in which he paints Dickens and the other novelists who represent "foul" fiction. We may differ from him in a thousand ways; but the fact remains that his criticism is always stimulating and that we learn more from him even when he is most wrong-headed, than we do from multitudes of criticisms to which no exception can be taken, but which lack the vitalising quality of Ruskin.

Notwithstanding all its perversities and inconsistencies, the permanent worth of Ruskin's work is immense. His very success makes it difficult to rate sufficiently high the daring originality of his art-criticism. Not only did he discover Turner, but the great Venetians as well. "Tintoret," he says, "was virtually unseen, Veronese unfelt, Carpaccio not so much as named, when I began to study them[1]." To have brought them to the light and to have supplied the eyes wherewith to see them, is itself a great achievement. And if in his later treatment of social and economic problems he achieved no such complete success, it would be a profound mistake to suppose that what he wrote produced no effect. He was one of the leaders in the revolt against orthodox political economy, and to him, in no small measure, are due the decay of individualism and the rise of socialism in these latter days. He saw the ugliness of the modern industrial system at a time when the great majority of his contemporaries were under the spell of its power. Though few of his peculiar opinions have been adopted exactly as he held them, yet for thirty years the whole tendency of English thought has been towards conclusions cognate to those which he could hardly get liberty to express.

[1] *Præterita*, i. 235.

Even where he seems, and is, least practical, there is an underlying truth in his doctrines; and his most violent excesses are the corrective of an opposite excess at least as far removed from the perfect balance. This test of the practical is that which he can least bear; but it is also that which, for him, is least just. "He writes," said Charlotte Brontë, with keen insight, "like a consecrated priest of the Abstract and Ideal[1]." This was his true function,—to be, for a materialising age and a practical nation, the priest of the visionary and impalpable, and to prove that this too is real by showing how it moulds character.

Though the influence of Ruskin was powerful upon all the art critics who came after him, it would be a mistake to suppose that he was the sole impulsive force, or that if he had not written their work would not have been done. Books like Pugin's *Contrasts* (1836) prove that the time was ripe for such work. The love of mediævalism in art was now sufficiently old to examine itself and to feel the need of understanding the reasons upon which it rested. Hence, soon after Ruskin began to write, and at first independently of him, the Pre-Raphaelites began to formulate their principles. Among the contents of their magazine, *The Germ*, were two very able articles on *The Subject in Art* by John Lucas Tupper, a sculptor and a friend of Holman Hunt; and above all there was the exceedingly striking and beautifully written allegorical tale by Dante Rossetti entitled *Hand and Soul*, which contains the whole essence of Pre-Raphaelitism both in art and in poetry. The story of the blind gropings of Chiaro dell' Erma recalls the aspirations of Browning's *Paracelsus*, by which Rossetti's article may have been influenced; for before this date he had become one of Browning's most ardent admirers. Chiaro at first aims at fame, and wins it, only to find it unsatisfying. He starts anew with the purpose of impressing the beholder by the presentment of moral greatness; and to do this "he did not choose for his medium the action and passion of human life, but cold symbolism and abstract impersonation." Again he has gone astray; his works have no power of appeal to the general heart; and the frescoes presenting a moral allegory of Peace are

[1] Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

crimsoned with the blood of brawlers. Chiaro himself, moreover, remains as unsatisfied as ever. In his helplessness and bewilderment there appears to him a vision, the image of his own soul, which addresses him, exhorts him, explains how far and why he has failed in the past, and how he may win real success in what may yet remain to him of a future. It is in the utterances of Chiaro's soul that we find the core of the Pre-Raphaelite creed.

"Seek thine own conscience (not thy mind's conscience, but thine heart's), and all shall approve and suffice."..."Look well lest this also be folly,—to say, 'I, in doing this, do strengthen God among men.' When at any time hath he cried unto thee, 'My son, lend me thy shoulder, for I fall?'"..."Give thou to God no more than he asketh of thee, but to man also, that which is man's. In all that thou doest work from thine own heart, simply; for his heart is as thine, when thine is wise and humble; and he shall have understanding of thee." And the closing injunction of the vision is, "Chiaro, servant of God, take now thine Art unto thee, and paint me thus, as I am, to know me: weak, as I am, and in the weeds of this time; only with eyes which seek out labour, and with a faith, not learned, yet jealous of prayer. Do this; so shall thy soul stand before thee always, and perplex thee no more."

The doctrine meant to be conveyed is unmistakable. First we have the abjuration of the old false motives of art. The strife for fame and the direct aim to embody faith and to teach morality, are alike wrong. All external canons are renounced. The artist's true guide is his own soul, his true business is to work from his own heart, the rules which are binding on him are the rules which he finds written there. What is there he is to paint: that, to him, is at once nature and the true and only religion. It is in this sense that the Pre-Raphaelite movement is a return to nature. The Pre-Raphaelites did not primarily interest themselves in external nature; and it is significant that, in his brother's list of those poets who had greatly influenced Dante Rossetti, we do not find the name of Wordsworth. Herein it is manifest that Rossetti is widely different from Ruskin, who was not only a disciple of

Wordsworth, but was, almost in his own despite, a devotee of external nature.

A similar doctrine is taught in a group of three sonnets entitled *The Choice*, which were afterwards embodied in *The House of Life*. They are primarily ethical, but they are quite in harmony with such a theory of art as this. They present three alternatives of life. The first is, "Eat thou and drink," the second, "Watch thou and fear," and the third, "Think thou and act"; and it is manifest that Rossetti deems the third the true choice. Man's business is neither to live for the pleasure of the moment, nor to watch and pray in awe of a power above him, but to think and act in the sphere in which he finds himself. It is Goethe's self-realisation over again; and if the result is different, it is because the self to be realised is different to begin with. It is in essence a conception intensely individualistic; and it reminds us that, if the Pre-Raphaelites were in some respects in harmony with the party of the Catholic reaction, they also came into being when the most individualistic of English schools of thought was at the summit of its power.

Inferior only to Ruskin and Rossetti in his influence upon the aesthetic movement was Walter Pater (1839–1894), a man whose work it is impossible to read without admiration tinged with a certain regret; it is so admirable for the end in view, and yet it carries so unmistakably the marks of decadence. Pater was one of those fastidious writers condemned, like Gray, by what is strongest as well as by what is weakest in their own nature to a certain meagreness of production, and his native tendency was increased by the view he took of the circumstances of the age in which he lived. Not Arnold himself was more impressed by its complexity. "That imaginative prose," he says, "should be the special and opportune art of the modern world results from two important facts about the latter: first, the chaotic variety and complexity of its interests, making the intellectual issue, the really master currents of the present time incalculable—a condition of mind little susceptible of the restraints proper to verse form, so that the most characteristic verse of the nineteenth century has been lawless verse; and secondly, an all-pervading naturalism a

curiosity about everything whatever as it really is, involving a certain humility of attitude, cognate to what must, after all, be the less ambitious form of literature[1]." This passage from the essay on Style belongs to the later period of Pater's authorship; but the ideas were his from the start, and it is evident that the man who was thus impressed by the complexity of the issues, and humbled by the wide range of curiosity, was not likely to rush prematurely into print, or to be very copious and facile as an author. His earliest contribution to literature was the essay on Coleridge, first printed in 1866; and from that date onwards he slowly produced the papers gathered together in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), *Imaginary Portraits* (1887), *Appreciations* (1889), *Greek Studies* (1895) and *Miscellaneous Studies* (1895). *Plato and Platonism* (1893) was the outcome of lectures which he delivered with almost as much suffering as Carlyle, though lecturing was part of the business of Pater's life. His most ambitious, and on the whole his greatest, work, *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), was the fruit of six years of the most concentrated labour he ever gave. *Gaston de Latour* (1896), which might have rivalled *Marius*, remained unfinished at his death.

With the exception of *Marius*, the lectures on Plato and the unfinished *Gaston de Latour*, the whole of Pater's work belongs to the class of miscellaneous writings, and formally it is critical rather than creative; but, though the subjects are various, the impression conveyed is remarkably uniform. All that Pater wrote is as deeply marked with the personality of the writer as is the work of Ruskin himself. In both cases we may doubt whether the interpretation of the critic would have been accepted by the artist; but also in both cases the work has a value independent of the question of the soundness of the interpretation. We may reasonably think Pater's description of La Gioconda over-wrought, we may suspect that it puts too much into the picture, we may even doubt whether it be not, as an interpretation of Leonardo, wholly misleading; but, even so, it remains a very beautiful piece of writing and in itself a valuable work of art. Pope's *Homer*

[1] *Appreciations*, 7.

may not be Homer, but if it is "a very pretty poem," it has a solid value of its own.

Pater illustrates the complexity of the age, which so deeply impressed him, by the multitude of strands which are twined together in his own work. The Middle Ages and the Italian Renascence, painting and poetry, classicism and romanticism, all contribute to it. No one carries the suggestion of more numerous and more various writers. The influence of Plato is pervasive, and that of Goethe only less so. Traces of Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites are less numerous than might be expected; for, though Pater had many sympathies in common with them, his methods were different. Breaths or whiffs of Sir Thomas Browne and Lamb and Hawthorne and Arnold, widely different as they are from one another and from Pater, are also borne by his sentences. And yet through all this he remains highly original and individual. Few writers are more completely non-dramatic than Pater. Whatever the character he depicts, it is always really Pater who appears upon the canvas. This is true of all the *Imaginary Portraits*, of *The Child in the House*, of *Emerald Uthwart* and of *Marius the Epicurean*. The mirror which Pater holds up to nature is one which can reflect only himself. There is nothing in the least degree objective in his work; it is hardly too much to say that the whole of it, whether intentionally or not, is autobiographic. The very artists and poets whom he passes in review have to take his colour, and it may be questioned whether he ever succeeded in putting himself in the place of the man he criticised. Hence he is best when he deals with men who have a large share of his own introspective, brooding nature, and he is unsatisfactory in dealing with a genius of the free and objective type, like Shakespeare. It can hardly be doubted that the elaborate passage in which he describes the effect of Oxford upon Uthwart is a transcript from his own experience. Uthwart, we are told, cares for the beauties of Oxford, in themselves, and except through association, less when he is among them than in retrospect. But then, "It was almost retrospect even now, with an anticipation of regret, in rare moments of solitude perhaps, when the oars splashed far up the narrow streamlets through the fields on May

evenings among the fritillaries—does the reader know them? that strange remnant just here of a richer extinct flora—dry flowers, though with a drop of dubious honey in each. Snakes' heads, the rude call them, for their shape, scale-marked too, and in colour like rusted blood, as if they grew from some forgotten battle-field, the bodies, the rotten armour—yet delicate, beautiful, waving proudly[1]."

It would be hard to find a passage more characteristic of Pater's peculiar imagination than this, or more illustrative both of his merits and his defects. There is a kind of uncanniness in it, as there is sometimes in Hawthorne, and in spite of its beauty the reader is tempted to ask whether it is altogether wholesome. This, certainly, would hardly do for "human nature's daily food." It is the product of a highly artificial, perhaps a decadent, life, it is the air of the hot-house, to be breathed now and then for the sake of the strange and beautiful flowers that grow there, but whence the escape into the free air of heaven is a joy and a relief.

In the case of Pater then, the "personal equation" is a thing for which liberal allowance must be made, and his judgments both of painters and of writers commend themselves rather to a coterie than to the world at large. They are, in short, "appreciations" rather than judgments. There is however another aspect to Pater's critical work. He can hardly be called technically a philosopher; his *Plato and Platonism* is essentially an attempt to get at the thought through sympathy with the thinker; and so far as he deals with abstract principles, he prefers principles of the emotional nature to principles of the understanding. But few have written more wisely upon style, and the sentence in which he concentrates the essence of his doctrine is unimpeachable:—"Say what you have to say, what you have a will to say, in the simplest, the most direct and exact manner possible, with no surplusage:—there, is the justification of the sentence so fortunately born, 'entire, smooth, and round,' that it needs no punctuation, and also (that is the point!) of the most elaborate period, if it be right in its elaboration[2]." Few, again, have more wisely discriminated between the romantic and the classical elements in

[1] *Miscellaneous Studies*, 231. [2] *Appreciations*, 32.

literature. He finds the essential elements of the romantic spirit to be "curiosity and the love of beauty," that of the classical spirit, "a comely order." He quotes with qualified approval Stendhal's saying that "all good art was romantic in its day"; and his own love for and affinity to the romantic spirit is obvious. But the true function of Pater is to make the romantic once more classical, to superimpose the "comely order" upon beauty, and in doing so inevitably to reduce the strangeness. This he does almost in spite of himself, and yet with the approval of his own judgment. The influence of Goethe upon him is due to his sense that Goethe too, in a far larger way, did the same. In the essay on Winckelmann he points out that Goethe illustrates the union of the romantic spirit with Hellenism, and the preponderance of the Hellenic element. Of this union, says Pater, the art of the nineteenth century is the child. His point of view therefore is similar to that of Matthew Arnold; but that breath from the outer world which Arnold brings is never felt in Pater. He is cloistered, —a recluse looking out from the windows of a College upon a world in which he has no part or lot. The whole moral atmosphere of the two men is also different. Pater, from first to last, is epicurean, while through the playful banter of Arnold there is always audible the undertone of Stoicism.

CHAPTER III

MISCELLANEOUS PROSE

THE miscellaneous prose of this period presents almost as difficult a problem of selection as the fiction, and is even more baffling in respect of arrangement. There is however no difficulty about the first figure. For age, for copiousness and for distinction, Walter Savage Landor (1775–1864) clearly deserves the precedence; and though a poet so considerable may seem out of place among miscellaneous writers, yet his greatest work is in prose, and it can only be classified in this way.

Landor was throughout his long life a strange union of contradictions. A republican and yet a born aristocrat, a polished gentleman who dropped his h's, a life-long rebel who was by nature a despot, a man of the most exquisite tenderness yet of ungovernable violence, a classical scholar and a model of classical style yet of ultra-romantic freakishness, there is scarcely anything that may be said of him which has not to be qualified by something that seems almost to annul it. The key-note of Landor's life is struck in his rustication from Oxford for an act of violence in 1794. In 1808 he went to Spain to support the cause of Spanish independence; but neither independence nor anything else can be supported without some control of temper, which Landor could not or would not exercise. Returning to England, he bought the estate of Llanthony Abbey in Monmouthshire. He had great and generous plans for its improvement; but in the end he quarrelled with all around him, lost his own capital, and effected nothing. In 1811 he married in haste, and found leisure to repent in the fifty-three years of life which remained to

him. He went abroad in 1814, and from 1815 to 1835 he lived in Italy, during the latter part of the period at Florence. A violent quarrel with his wife drove him back to England, where he settled at Bath. Twenty-three years later he was once more driven into exile by an action of libel which he had provoked. In Florence, to which he returned, he died, and there he lies buried in the cemetery which holds so much memorable English dust.

There are few English writers about whom opinion is more sharply divided than it is about Landor. He never has been and he never can be popular. "I shall dine late, but the dining-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select," is the well-known expression of his own opinion about his own ultimate position. It calls to mind Milton's "fit audience, though few"; but there is this difference between the two poets, that about Milton critical opinion, at least, is undivided, and the multitude buy *Paradise Lost* though they do not read it; while about Landor critics dispute and the multitude are indifferent because they know him not. The reason of the difference is that, just as in Landor's character immense force was conjoined with a weakness almost childish, so in his works elements of grandeur scarcely to be surpassed are found in union with weaknesses and incapacities which are almost fatal to true excellence.

Landor's immensely long life gives him a peculiar interest. When he began to write, *Lyrical Ballads* was not yet published, and before he ended all his own great contemporaries as well as many younger men were dead. Carlyle had almost finished his literary career. Macaulay was dead. Thackeray died within a few months of the appearance of the *Heroic Idylls* (1863); and Dickens had only seven more years to live. The Brontës had come and gone, and George Eliot was in mid-career. Browning and Tennyson had been writing for thirty years. Darwin's great work was shaking the world. In short, Landor, having lived through the whole of one great era, had survived to see a second past its meridian. No one else in an equal degree belongs at once to the Revolutionary period and to the Victorian. At the same time, scarcely any one stands so aloof from both.

Landor's earliest publication was a volume of poems in 1795; but it was three years later before his first work of note, *Gebir*, was published. A few years afterwards he translated it into Latin, and this interchange of tongues was repeated subsequently when the *Idyllia Heroica* were translated and incorporated in the *Hellenics* (1847). Landor was one of the most skilful, as well as one of the last, of those who have practised the exotic art of Latin verse. Love of the art and pleasure in the exercise of his own skill were, no doubt, the real causes of his writing Latin verses; but it is amusing and also instructive to read that one object of the Latin translation of *Gebir* was to make the English original popular. What might not be expected of a man who could conceive and carry out such a scheme? But this story of the legendary prince who gave his name to Gibraltar was neither by its substance nor by its treatment calculated for popularity. It remains fragmentary, much of it is episodic, and the "statuesque" quality in the style, which struck both Southey and De Quincey, though it is eminently literary, had little attraction for the average reader. And the average reader could plead for himself that, though it is easy to extract fine fragments from *Gebir*, it is not easy to maintain that the whole is a fine poem. Throughout this remained one of Landor's greatest defects. Classical as he was in style, he had a most unclassical incapacity for constructing a whole.

Count Julian (1812) is Landor's earliest attempt in the drama. Long afterwards he followed it up with the trilogy on the story of Queen Giovanna of Naples (1839–1841) and the *Siege of Ancona* (1846), the last of which has been pronounced by some good judges his best drama. Probably however the majority will agree with Mr Crump in preferring *Count Julian*. But in truth all Landor's dramas are compositions which have only a distant relation to the stage, and they are correctly described by himself as "no better than *Imaginary Conversations* in metre." In spite of the fact that much of his best work, both in prose and verse, is dramatic in form, Landor had not really the essentials of dramatic genius. He could never get himself out of the way. As Browning (who recognised the kinship, and declared that he "owed more as a writer to Landor than to any contemporary[1]") always wrote like

[1] *Mrs Browning's Letters*, edited by Kenyon.

Browning, so Landor's style is always Landor's, whoever may be the speaker. And it must be added that he is far from being as successful as Browning in losing himself in the other characters. Browning's characters speak the words of Browning, but their sentiments are their own; in the case of Landor, we are always liable to see Landor as well as to hear his voice. Such success as he achieves is won when the character in some degree resembles himself. This is the cause of the superiority of *Count Julian*. The passions which sway Julian's nature and the revenge he plans are just such as Landor himself would have felt and might have planned under such a wrong as that which Julian suffered. Hence the sympathy with which Landor enters into this character and its superiority to the other *dramatis personae*. But it is the extravagance of injudicious praise to couple Count Julian, as De Quincey did, with Milton's Satan and the Prometheus of Aeschylus.

Up to the *Idyllia Heroica*, published in 1814 and reprinted with additions in 1820, Landor had figured exclusively as a poet; but he had not before found where his true strength as a poet lay. The management of the narrative in *Gebir* proves that he had not epic genius, and even *Count Julian* is not satisfactory as a drama. In the *Idyllia Heroica* he struck his true vein. They were dramatic scenes, not dramas, or short tales, not narratives of epic proportions; and in them Landor's weakness in the constructive faculty is hid, while his noble style gives them dignity and weight. He had already tried this style in *Chrysaor*, which first appeared in an anonymous volume of poetry published in 1802. It is in pieces like this, and the *Hamadryad*, and *The Shades of Agamemnon and Iphigeneia*, and in the pieces entitled *To Corinth* and *Regeneration*, that Landor's real greatness as a poet appears. There must be added the epigrams, in which he has scarcely an equal in English, and some snatches of lyrical verse, including such gems as the magical *Rose Aylmer*, and the majestic lines,

> "I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;
> Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art;
> I warmed both hands before the fire of life,
> It sinks and I am ready to depart."

In such short pieces Landor at his best is unsurpassed; and a rigorous selection of these, with choice passages from the longer poems, might give him the appearance of a great poet. But great as a poet he in truth is not. There is too much dross mingled with the gold of the shorter poems, and the longer ones are too faulty in construction, to give him a good title to that rank.

Landor wrote poetry all through his career, and the lines above quoted, which read like an old man's farewell to life, were printed in a volume which was published when he was seventy-eight. But in the main, poetry was the pursuit of Landor's youth and early middle age, and prose was the form which he chose by preference in later years. Certainly the greatest of his works are the *Imaginary Conversations* (1824–1853).

The form which best suited Landor was the dialogue, or that cognate form employed in *Pericles and Aspasia* (1836), where we seem to have a dialogue conducted by letters. He had plenty of predecessors. He was no admirer of Plato, and would not have been attracted to the dialogue by the fact that Plato had employed it. Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead* have a closer resemblance to Landor's design; and he may have been influenced by the fact that Southey, whom he admired and loved above all contemporaries, had in mind his *Colloquies on Society* at the time when Landor began to work on his *Conversations*.

The dialogue could be made as episodic as Landor pleased; for a chance suggestion is sufficient to turn a conversation in a new direction. He rarely develops one train of thought systematically, as Plato does. The longer dialogues often reflect his whims and caprices, while the shorter ones are consistent and coherent because of their shortness. There is one important exception in *Pericles and Aspasia*, certainly the best-sustained work that Landor ever produced, and one singularly consistent in its development of the characters of both Pericles and Aspasia. If Browning meant to acknowledge indebtedness to Landor in respect of dramatic intuition, he probably had this work in mind. There is however a striking similarity between the two in one other point. Both show the same indifference to action, and the

same concentrated interest in a dramatic situation just before or just after fateful action.

It is in the classical dialogues that Landor is happiest; for there his knowledge was ripest, and there too his sympathies, both as man and as artist, were keenest. In these also his style is at its best; for there is a kind of pre-established harmony between the subject and the treatment. As a master of severe yet magnificent English, Landor has no superior and hardly an equal. *Æsop and Rhodopè* is an acknowledged masterpiece for the tender beauty of the story and the perfection of the language. Less celebrated, but hardly less excellent, is the praise of Greece put into the mouth of Panaetius in the dialogues with Scipio Aemilianus and Polybius; and there are many other passages, especially in the Roman dialogues, which have the same austere beauty. The Greek dialogues are more flexible, as the Greek character was, and the best soar even higher than the Roman. Probably Landor was right in his own preference for the conversation of Epicurus with Leontion and Ternissa.

Even in the *Conversations*, however, the shortcomings of the poems reappear. The parts are superior to the whole: Landor is master of the paragraph rather than the complete dialogue, and of the sentence rather than the paragraph. There is scarcely a dialogue he has written from which sentences of the highest excellence could not be quoted, and there are few which are not marred by flaws of taste. His prejudices, of inordinate admiration or unmeasured dislike, appear in the most unexpected places. In *Gebir*, the hero visits the under-world, and there he finds the shade of the King of England who was reigning when *Gebir* was written. In this violent way Landor constantly drags in his own loves and hates,—more frequently, as was natural, in the modern than in the classical dialogues; and this difference is among the causes of the superiority of the latter.

One of Landor's special gifts is the power of giving memorable expression to thoughts which may be stigmatised as commonplace, but which are so only because they have regard to the common destiny of mankind. One of his favourite reflections, driven home to him, perhaps, by his own unpopularity, is on the fate of the great

man to be fully known only when he is dead. The fine couplet about "the gates of fame and of the grave," quoted in the introduction to this book, is his, and in the *Conversations* he reiterates the thought once and again. "The voice comes deepest from the sepulchre, and a great name hath its roots in the dead body." "The sun colours the sky most deeply and most diffusely when he hath sunk below the horizon; and they who never said, 'How beneficently he shines!' say at last, 'How brightly he set!'" The close of the dialogue of Alexander and the priest of Hammon (a poor dialogue, because it is filled with Landorian prejudice) is a wonderful example of this use of the commonplace. There is no idea more trite than that of the kinship of man with the dust; yet it can be handled with magnificent literary effect. The burial service of the Church of England shows one way of doing it: Landor found another. The interlocutors are just issuing from the cavern where Alexander has been shown the horrible serpent which is declared to be the daughter of Jupiter. The conversation originally ended with the words of Alexander, "Glory to Jupiter the Ram!" By a happy afterthought Landor added,

"*Priest.* Thou stoppest on a sudden thy prayers and praises to Father Jupiter. Son Alexander, art thou not satisfied? What ails thee, drawing the back of thy hand across thine eyes?

Alexander. A little dust flew into them as the door opened.

Priest. Of that dust are the sands of the desert and the Kings of Macedon."

"Ripeness is all." There never was a better illustration of the fact that setting may make all the difference between the commonplace and the great, or of the fact that the knowledge when to be silent is sometimes the truest eloquence.

It would be easy to multiply examples. In prose as in verse Landor is one of the most quotable of writers. He gains by having his gems taken from their setting, for they are perfect in themselves. There are other writers, like Scott, who cannot be adequately represented in fragments, because they neither aim at nor achieve perfection in the parts, but rather rely upon general effects. The difference illustrates the uncertainty of judgment by selections. It would be easy by means of extracts to exhibit

Landor as a much greater man than Scott. Regarded purely as a prose stylist, he is indeed far greater; and his best verses are technically much more perfect than Scott's. And yet, both in verse and in prose, the more faulty writer is the greater man.

There is one aspect of Landor's prose work which demands special notice,—his literary criticism, upon which a scathing judgment has been pronounced by one of the latest critics of critics. "Of judicial quality or qualities," writes Professor Saintsbury[1], "he had not one single trace, and, even putting them out of the question, his intelligence was streaked and flawed by strange veins of positive silliness." Though the judgment requires some qualification (and receives it from Professor Saintsbury himself), it contains an amount of truth fatal to Landor's pretensions as a critic. He is best judged, not by the formal criticisms, but by the conversations devoted to critical themes, of which the principal are the dialogues between Southey and Porson on Wordsworth, and those between Southey and Landor on Milton. In these dialogues there is indeed ample evidence of acumen, but it is often misdirected, and gives an impression of carping peevishness altogether destructive of the dignity of the subject. Of the dialogues on Wordsworth, the second, which is of nearly twenty years later date than its predecessor, reads almost like a recantation of the praise bestowed in the first, and constitutes, in effect, a most ungenerous attack upon the old poet. The fact that many of the criticisms are in themselves sound is no justification. No other great poet can be made ridiculous so easily as Wordsworth; and this fact lays upon the critic the obligation to accompany the censure which is just with the praise which is still more just. It is no real defence of Landor that the criticisms are put into the mouth of Porson and are therefore to be regarded as dramatic utterances. He was under no obligation to write them. They are in themselves as offensive as any of the early critical attacks upon Wordsworth, and, if they had been made early, would probably have been more harmful, because they are enforced by numerous quotations.

Many have felt that one of the difficulties in the study of

[1] *History of Criticism*, iii. 276.

Landor is the extraordinary contrast, as it seems to them, between his life and character on the one hand, and his works on the other. Superficially, the contrast is complete; and though in reality we may trace the man in his works, there are still very remarkable differences. Such inconsistences as this which has just been mentioned about Wordsworth, such violence as appears in his unmeasured censure of Canning, the prejudice which shines through every reference to Pitt, the utter untrustworthiness of judgment visible almost everywhere in the *Conversations*, are just what might be expected from such a man as Landor was. The contradiction between the man and his works lurks in the style rather than the substance. *A priori*, Landor's style might have been expected to be turbid and lawless; in reality, the adjectives which have been applied to it are "monumental," "statuesque," "severe," "austere," whatever may suggest the very opposite of turbidity or lawlessness. Little more can be said by way of explanation than that the love of high and restrained literature and the instinct for language were as much inborn in him as the violent passions with which these qualities seem so inconsistent. It was no case of gradual development and of force turning nature from her path. Landor was incapable of the consistent and persevering exercise of such force; and his earliest writings, alike in verse and in prose, exhibit the qualities which distinguished him through the whole of his long career.

Of all the writers of his time Landor stands most alone. Coming at the moment of the great romantic revival, a generous admirer of Southey and in his saner moments of Wordsworth (though he was always unjust to Coleridge), Landor nevertheless was through life a classicist rather than a romanticist. In many ways he was akin to the eighteenth century, and may be regarded as a link between it and the nineteenth. His preference of Aristotle to Plato is significant of much. "His religion," says Leslie Stephen, "was that of the eighteenth century noble." His classicism, it is true, was founded on deeper and far more comprehensive scholarship than that of Pope; yet this too serves to connect him with the past.

Another link with a past age is supplied by Mary Russell

Mitford (1787–1855), whose tragedies are briefly noticed elsewhere. Her works are both varied and of considerable bulk, including stories and poems of many kinds besides the dramas. Among the rest is one of those curious notes of sex which female writers can seldom refrain from introducing—*Narrative Poems on the Female Character* (1813). But in these spheres she must take a subordinate position, while she has her own little niche in literature where she is queen. The author of *Our Village* (1824–1832) has a position safer than that of many far more pretentious figures, for her sketches are quite the best of their kind, except *Cranford*. They originally appeared in *The London Magazine*; and there is something in the shrewd observation of the writer, as well as in the humour, which calls to mind along with her the special glory of *The London Magazine*, Charles Lamb. The closest affinity however is that between Miss Mitford and the American writer who is still best known as Miss Mary Wilkins, and who has done for the rural life of New England, with almost equal grace and with quite equal humour, what the elder writer did some half a century earlier for the rural life of Old England.

The powers with which Miss Mitford was most richly endowed might be expected to give merit to anything from her pen of a reminiscent or autobiographic nature, and her letters confirm the expectation. But anyone who turns with high hopes to her *Recollections of a Literary Life* (1852) will be disappointed. The little local pictures and the fragments of autobiography are, it is true, excellent. No reader can forget how she, a little girl, was taken by her imprudent and somewhat unprincipled, though kindly, father to a lottery office, where she chose a number, obstinately insisted upon it in spite of difficulties, and by means of that number won a large prize,—which speedily slipped through her father's fingers, as her mother's fortune had slipped through them before. But the criticism, of which the book principally consists, though not without grace, is of small intrinsic value, and deals mainly with subjects which have been treated with more insight by others.

In *Our Village*, on the other hand, Miss Mitford is almost faultless. She never strikes a wrong note: style and thought are

completely in harmony with the nature of the subject-matter. Her close observation of the character of villagers and of the incidents of village life, her love of nature and of animals, her kindliness of tone combined with a gently sarcastic humour, and her charmingly pure and easy English, make the book delightful to read. She is a keener and closer observer of inanimate nature, of animals and of incidents, than her fellow-artist, Miss Wilkins; but perhaps in the delineation of humours the advantage lies on the whole with the latter. Another writer with whom Miss Mitford may be usefully compared is Mrs Gaskell, many of the qualities of whose masterpiece, *Cranford*, are present also in *Our Village*. In all three there is an unmistakably feminine touch; but in their case "feminine" does not mean "weak" or "inferior."

The foundation of Miss Mitford's art is sympathy, by reason of which she ranks among those writers who are even more beloved than they are admired. It is sympathy which guides her observation, and it is sympathy too which inspires her humour. *An Admiral on Shore*, with all its lively and gently amusing detail, is full of sympathy; so is *My School-Fellows*; so is *The Vicar's Maid*. But perhaps the best illustration of the humour and pathos, which are the two manifestations of this sympathy, is to be found in *Modern Antiques*. It is impossible to read without a smile the description of the little old maid in the presence of her lover of bygone years:—"She blushed and bridled; fidgeted with her mittens on her apron; flirted a fan nearly as tall as herself, and held her head on one side with that peculiar air which I have noted in the shyer birds, and ladies in love." For delicacy of observation the comparison of the old lady in love with a shy bird is unsurpassed. But Miss Mitford's sympathy is too deep to stop with laughter alone:—"She manoeuvred to get him next her at the tea-table; liked to be his partner at whist; loved to talk of him in his absence; knew to an hour the time of his return; and did not dislike a little gentle raillery on the subject—even I—But, traitress to my sex, how can I jest with such feelings? Rather let me sigh over the world of woe, that in fifty years of hopeless constancy must have passed through that maiden heart! The timid hopes; the sickening suspense; the slow, slow fear; the bitter disappoint-

ment; the powerless anger; the relenting; the forgiveness; and then again, that interest, kinder, truer, more unchanging than friendship, that lingering woman's love—Oh how can I jest over such feelings? They are passed away—for she is gone, and he—but they clung by her to the last, and ceased only in death."

Somewhat younger, but still old enough to supply another link between the eighteenth century and the nineteenth, was Julius Hare (1795–1855) who, in conjunction with his brother Augustus (1792–1834), wrote the once-celebrated *Guesses at Truth* (1827), but who is now most widely known by reason of his connexion with John Sterling, and through Sterling with Carlyle. Hare was in his earlier days an associate of Thirlwall, and was one of those who helped to popularise German literature and philosophy in England. In his time he played a considerable part in controversy. He crossed swords with Sir William Hamilton, the metaphysician, on behalf of Luther, whose character for orthodoxy he considered to have been impugned by Hamilton; and as Archdeacon of Lewes he sought in his charges to withstand the Romanising influence of Newman and his followers. *Guesses at Truth* is a collection of aphorisms on a wide variety of subjects,—theology, morals, literature, politics, philosophy. Many of them are well written, but few have that compression which befits an aphorism: the tendency of the Hares was to expand rather than to condense. In short, though good, the *Guesses* are not the best; and the aphoristic form, even more than the poetic, demands the highest excellence. Perhaps the very absence of any striking originality contributed to their popularity. They expressed attractively thoughts just a little beyond the reach of the average man, but not too complex for his comprehension.

The stamp of the commonplace is still more clear upon the works of Sir Arthur Helps (1813–1875), the most characteristic of which are not unlike *Guesses at Truth*. In his lifetime Helps won a reputation far higher than he deserved; and they were no ordinary men who praised him. Ruskin in one passage names him along with Wordsworth and Carlyle as one of the three

moderns to whom he owed most; and elsewhere he is linked with Plato and Carlyle as one of those thinkers who by their sincerity become in some sort seers. The association of Helps with such names as these seems ludicrous now, and his numerous volumes, historical, biographical, dramatic and aphoristic, will be searched in vain for a justification. Judgments such as Ruskin's must either be passed over as among the enigmas of contemporary criticism, or we must suppose that even the man of genius has a liking for the commonplace when it happens to be seasoned to his taste. Of all that Helps attempted, that which he did best was the essay or dialogue of social criticism and the minor ethics. This is the substance of his *Friends in Council* (1847–1859) and *Companions of my Solitude* (1851). These books are not without value for their common sense, but the thought is somewhat attenuated.

There is more solid substance in the writings of William Rathbone Greg (1809–1881), although he never won such praise as was showered upon Helps. The reason was, perhaps, partly the acerbity of his literary manner, and partly the fact that he was usually on the unpopular side. He rarely said smooth things, and his opinions, both on religion and on politics, were of the sort which are accepted unwillingly if they are accepted at all. In religion, Greg was one of those thoughtful Unitarians who were and are numerous in his native county of Lancashire, and his *Creed of Christendom* (1851), which caused considerable stir when it was published, expressed opinions which were by no means in harmony with those of the majority. His *Enigmas of Life* (1872), a book which dealt with cognate problems, attained a far wider popularity, passing in twenty years through no fewer than eighteen editions. It bears on every page the impress of the writer's profound sincerity, and is on the whole his most valuable work. But Greg handled political and economic as well as ethical and religious topics, and here too he made himself the champion of unpopular views. In politics, he was a doctrinaire of the Manchester school, condemning all interference between master and man, and, in his *Rocks Ahead* (1874), taking a gloomy view of the future because he saw how inevitable such interference was.

It can hardly be said that Greg was gifted with great speculative originality, but he was distinguished for the intellectual quality of lucidity and the moral quality of sincerity; and the combination brings it about that his books are among the best adapted to afford a view of the contemporary problems upon which they touch, as these problems appeared to a remarkably keen intelligence.

We rise to a higher plane of literature in the bright, terse, humorous sentences of William Brighty Rands (1823–1882), a man as much under-rated as Helps has been over-rated. He found no one to link his name with the names of Plato and Carlyle and Wordsworth. Many, both children and adults, who were delighted with his *Lilliput Levee* (1864) and *Lilliput Lectures* (1871), never knew the name of the man who had given them pleasure; for Rands wrote anonymously or under the pseudonyms of Matthew Browne and Henry Holbeach, and the world was not sufficiently interested to penetrate his disguise. He wrote poetry as well as prose. The above-named volumes are among the best collections of children's verses in the language, and the name of Rands ought to be associated with the names of Lewis Carroll and R. L. Stevenson among the authors of that library of juvenile literature which is one of the most graceful and beautiful products of recent years. Like those of the other two, the verses of Rands, though meant for children, are none the less true poetry, and delightful to adults as well. The anthology must be indeed select in which the little girl's address to the earth would not deserve a place:—

"Great, wide, beautiful, wonderful World,
With the wonderful water round you curled,
And the wonderful grass upon your breast—
World, you are beautifully dressed.

The wonderful air is over me,
And the wonderful wind is shaking the tree,
It walks on the water, and whirls the mills,
And talks to itself on the top of the hills.

You friendly Earth! how far do you go,
With the wheat-fields that nod, and the rivers that flow,
With cities, and gardens, and cliffs, and isles,
And people upon you for thousands of miles?

Ah, you are so great and I am so small,
I tremble to think of you, World, at all;
And yet when I said my prayers to-day,
A whisper inside me seemed to say,
'You are more than the Earth, though you are such a dot:
You can love and think, and the Earth cannot!'"

In his prose Rands is always thoughtful and often distinguished. His *Chaucer's England* (1869) is a sound and scholarly work; but he is seen at his best in *Views and Opinions* (1866) and above all in *Henry Holbeach, Student in Life and Philosophy* (1865), where, much in the fashion of Hare and Helps, but with more power and depth than either, he utters keen and original criticisms on the politics, society and religion of contemporary England, in a style of mingled humour and sarcasm which is exceedingly attractive. Rands either did not possess or did not care to exercise the dramatic gift of creation; but no one could put a keener edge upon a distinction, and he could describe and contrast types of character with rare felicity. He knew the English mind thoroughly in all its social and religious distinctions. He had the subtlety of observation with respect to classes which George Eliot brings to bear upon individuals, and George Eliot must have delighted in, if she ever read, his description of the minister of the Little Meeting, "a very energetic, active man, wiry in frame; but a shoe-maker, self-taught; his heart amply supplied with the milk of human-kindness, and his creed blazing with damnation." Perhaps there is nothing else in Rands altogether so beautiful as the verses quoted, or so clearly etched as the picture of the minister of the Little Meeting, but there is much that may fairly be compared with them. He is a man who will bear study, and whose works might with advantage be resuscitated.

In a time so late as the nineteenth century of the Christian era it might be expected that the literature of travel must have lost its zest through the exhaustion of the material; and it is true that the kind of mystery which shrouded the course of Columbus was gone, and great part even of that which spread round Captain Cook was dispelled. But there was still abundant possibility of adventure, and it is surprising to reflect how small a part of the

earth's surface was really known in the year 1800. Mungo Park had just begun to open the interior of Africa, the Far East was known only superficially, Central Asia and the interior of Australia not at all. Even so old a country as Egypt was very imperfectly understood. It was not till 1883 that the Egypt Exploration Fund was founded, largely through the exertions of the most distinguished of female Egyptologists, Amelia Blandford Edwards (1831–1892), whose *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (1877) shows a profound interest in the ancient history of Egypt, and possesses an uncommon power of awakening interest in the reader. The extreme North and the extreme South were at that date both beyond human ken. The bulk of the work which has since been done belongs rather to the history of discovery than to the history of literature; but two or three incidents and characters stand out so prominently that they have become a part both of history and of literature. The tragic story of Sir John Franklin and the heroic efforts to discover and relieve him profoundly impressed the English-speaking world in the middle of the nineteenth century. The honour of discovery belongs to Sir F. L. McClintock, who, in *The Voyage of the Fox* (1859), narrates how he solved the mystery of the fate of Franklin; but the literary honours belong to the American Elisha Kent Kane, whose *Arctic Explorations* (1856) is one of the most fascinating books of travel in the English language. It is quite worthy to stand as a rival to Curzon's *Monasteries of the Levant* (1849), which Ruskin pronounced to be "the most delightful book of travels I ever opened[1]," or indeed to anything except *Eöthen*.

A somewhat similar tie links the great missionary, David Livingstone (1813–1873), with the bold and adventurous newspaper correspondent, Henry Morton Stanley (1841–1904), who sought and found him in the heart of Africa, and who afterwards headed two of the most successful exploring expeditions ever undertaken in Africa. The writings of Livingstone are perfectly simple. He makes no pretence to eloquence, nor does he try by any artifice to heighten the effect, but this absence of effort renders the effect all the greater. Stanley, on the other hand,

[1] *Stones of Venice*, Introd. i. 23 n.

always retained the instincts and habits of the newspaper correspondent and had a keen eye to effect. Partly for this very reason the writings of the elder man are the more pleasing to read.

That missionary zeal which carried Livingstone in the footsteps of Robert Moffat has been one of the great incentives to the exploration of Africa; another has been that sense of mystery which, from before the days of Herodotus, surrounded the question of the sources of the Nile. No river in the whole world has had such a fascination for the human intellect. The Nile has been in touch with the oldest civilisations, and it has been, and is, of vital importance to one of the most interesting regions of the earth's surface. As its rise and fall brought plenty or starvation, all who dwelt upon or who even visited its banks were bound, if they had any intellectual curiosity at all, to wonder what was the unseen cause of its fluctuations. This problem fascinated, among others, John Hanning Speke (1827–1864), Richard Burton (1821–1890) and Samuel Baker (1821–1893). Explorers have not, as a class, been very articulate, and what they have written often owes its merit to plenitude of adventures and of new information rather than to skill in arrangement or expression. But no one of the whole class could be worse as a writer than Speke. His *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (1863) was his as regards its substance, but it owes whatever merit it possesses to the labour of his editor, who turned his shapeless sentences into English and brought order out of chaos. Baker's works, *The Albert N'yanza* (1866), *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia* (1867), *Ismailia* (1874), &c., are full of interest; but he too may be left to the geographer and explorer.

The case is very different with Sir Richard Burton, scholar and soldier, gentleman and adventurer, a knight-errant astray by some strange chance from the Middle Ages, his head filled with the lore which was foreign to his predecessors, but his heart as hotly athirst for adventures as Don Quixote's own. In his verses on Burton's death Swinburne suggests a comparison with Raleigh, and in all history and fiction there is probably no figure so like Burton's as that of the great Elizabethan adventurer.

Burton's private education in France and Italy perhaps laid the foundation of that love of languages which afterwards distinguished him. His career at Oxford was brought to a close after a year's residence by a sentence of rustication. After a short period of service in India he began that life of travel with which his name will always be chiefly associated. The journey recorded in the *Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah* (1855–1856) took place in 1852. The book has that stamp of individuality which Burton never failed to give to his works, and it proves him to have possessed an intimacy of knowledge of Eastern life and comprehension of the Eastern character almost unexampled among the men of the West; for at every moment the traveller's life depended upon the success of a disguise which few Europeans could have worn for a day without detection. Probably Burton's only rival in completeness of knowledge is Mr Doughty, the author of *Travels in Arabia Deserta*.

In 1854, and again in 1856, Burton was in Africa with Speke; but the two travellers quarrelled violently, and it was Speke who had the honour at last to discover the sources of the Nile. There was evidently something intractable in Burton: he could not act with others; and so he was time and again shunted on to a siding, and his immense knowledge of languages and of science, his energy, daring, enterprise and originality, all ended in failure, judged by the world's measure of success and failure. He was born to quarrel with officialdom. His name was struck off the army list, and he was dismissed from the consular service, though in the latter case he was soon reinstated. Curiously enough, he succeeded at Trieste another man of letters, Charles Lever, who, like himself, "drank fierce and fast" of the cup of life; and, like Lever, he lived and died there lamenting the fate which had consigned him to this quiet nook of the Adriatic. His latter years however were not without the relief of travel in Midian and in Africa.

Burton's books of travel, whether they deal with Asia, or Africa, or America, apart from their stores of fact and their records of adventure, have all a special value from the deep impress of individuality which they bear. It is this which gives

his books the *cachet* of literature. His style, if it were possible to disjoin it from the man, would not be very good; but it is Burton, and therefore just the fittest and best for his purpose. And the record of a personality comparable to Raleigh's, inscribed by his own hand, is clearly a precious possession. On the side of scholarship, Burton's most remarkable performance was, doubtless, the translation of *The Arabian Nights* (1885–1888); but the truth is that the interest in that translation rests largely upon ethnological grounds; and it has been shown since Burton's death that, simply as a translator, he was indebted, a good deal more than he had a strict right to be, to his predecessor Edward William Lane (1801–1876), the first man who made a version directly from the Arabic into English, a most accomplished Eastern scholar, and the author of an admirable book on the *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836). Regarded simply as a translation, and apart from the interest alluded to, there is probably as much merit in Burton's version of Camoens (1880–1884) as in the more celebrated *Arabian Nights*. The former at least reads well, and has won the praise of those Portuguese scholars who are entitled to an opinion about its merits as a translation.

Besides such professional or quasi-professional travellers and explorers as these, there were two literary nondescripts of the period, Borrow and Laurence Oliphant, who had a full share of the wanderer and adventurer in their blood, and who put enough of it into their writings to give them a close kinship with this group.

George Borrow (1803–1881) is certainly one of the most interesting, and in some respects one of the most puzzling, figures in recent literature. There are several points of contact between him and Burton. Both were notable linguists, though Burton's scholarship was much more accurate than that of Borrow, whose philology was ingenious and sometimes erratic conjecture rather than science. Both were men of splendid physique, daring to the verge of foolhardihood, sworn foes to convention, friends to the outcast and 'gangrel' classes of all countries. Both were "first-class fighting men"; but there is a difference between the hero of

the bouts of fisticuffs narrated in *Lavengro* and the author of *The Book of the Sword* (1884). Whether it be the weapon that makes the difference or no, it is certain that the comparison with the knight-errant, which is inevitable in the case of Burton, would never be suggested in that of Borrow. Both, finally, had a marked strain of the gypsy character if not of gypsy blood, and both were as restless as gypsies under any sort of restraint, and as eager for a free wandering life.

Burton's most adventurous travels took place in lands, not indeed very far off when distance is measured by parasangs, but morally distant by all the breadth of that gulf which separates East from West. Borrow in his earlier years might seem to have made it his task to show that characters and scenes almost as strange, and adventures scarcely less thrilling, might be encountered without crossing the narrow seas. It was long a moot point how far his books were faithful to fact and how far they were simply fictitious; but his biographer, Mr W. J. Knapp, who has followed his footsteps with patient industry and devotion, declares that "no truer books were ever penned than *The Bible in Spain* and *Lavengro—Romany-Rye*." He admits, indeed, that Borrow is untrustworthy in dates and such-like details, and it is possible that an element not of literal fact may have escaped the biographer; but his judgment of the essential truth of *Lavengro* (1851) and its sequel *The Romany-Rye* (1857) establishes these strange books as parts of an autobiography[1]. These two stories, however, only carry the narrative down to 1825, when Borrow was twenty-two years old. The travels there narrated were of the kind in which Borrow delighted all through his life. He always chose the byway and shunned the highway. He traversed, first and last, the greater part of Europe and much of the East; but his chosen companions were always wanderers and outcasts, and the scenes he delighted in were those which no other foreigner had ever visited. His special friends were the gypsies, and the greater part of his literary work, from *The Zincali* (1841), an account of the gypsies of Spain, to *Romano Lavo-Lil* (1874), a glossary of the English

[1] He is confirmed by Francis Hindes Groome (1857–1902), the editor of the former book and one of the greatest English authorities on gypsies.

gypsy language, was more or less intimately associated with them.

The charm of *Lavengro* and, in a less degree, of *The Romany-Rye* lies in their singular freshness of tone, their defiance of convention, their wealth of curious information, the exceeding strangeness that such things could happen and such lives could be led in a country so hedged in and plotted out as England, above all in the sense of abounding vitality which Borrow imparts. There is nothing like the joy of physical life which glows through his pages, except that which animates also the works of Christopher North. But keen as was his relish for a wandering and adventurous life, Borrow seems to have cared little for nature in the Wordsworthian sense. He enjoyed alike breezy mountain and shady lane, but he took them very much for granted: they were his environment, and there was no need to fuss and worry about them. The material upon which he worked was man, as man is when he is formed by contact with nature.

Borrow was not however wholly absorbed by his passion for the outcast races, but retained an interest also in the literary, political and social questions of civilised society. Above all, he was through life profoundly interested in the religious questions which were then dividing England. He was violently anti-Papal, and hated with a bitter hatred all that tended to draw England nearer to Rome. It was this passion, combined with his knowledge of languages, that induced him to turn towards the Bible Society, and commended him to it. The employment was in some respects highly congenial, for he had to travel in many countries, as well as to translate the Scriptures for their inhabitants, and to distribute copies among them. From this occupation Borrow's greatest book, *The Bible in Spain* (1843), took its origin. This narrative of his travels as a colporteur in Spain was the most astonishing as well as the most literary of all the reports the Bible Society ever received from its agents. The Society doubtless expected an elaborate and edifying tract, full of piety, of zeal for the scriptures and of assurances of their wonderful influence upon a benighted population. There are indeed such things in the book, but there is also a breezy worldliness which,

probably, the Society took with an uneasy pleasure—surprised and pained that so much of the Old Adam should survive, yet interested against their will. There are many books about Spain which describe Madrid and Seville and Cordova and Cadiz, the Alhambra, the Escurial, the cathedrals, the art-galleries; but there is probably no other—at least none written by an Englishman—which so lays open the heart of the country, the character of the people, the mode of life, not only off the beaten track, but among classes about whom the vast majority of Spaniards themselves probably know nothing. If *The Bible in Spain* be "one of the truest books ever penned" (and it has the stamp of truth), it is easy to believe that, in great part, it was not less surprising to the Spaniard than *Lavengro* was to the Englishman.

If any man of the nineteenth century might dispute with Burton the title of the modern Raleigh it would be Laurence Oliphant (1829–1888). Both the Victorians, as well as the Elizabethan, were in some sense visionaries; but Oliphant was more spiritual and less 'sensible,' in two meanings of the word, than the others. Like Burton's, his life is a record of apparent failure. Nothing that he did, nothing that he wrote, seems to realise the possibilities that were in him; and yet everything from his hand bears, more or less clearly, the stamp of genius, even if it be sometimes a genius near allied to madness.

Oliphant seemed to be a predestined wanderer. He was born at Cape Town, and, after a brief school career at Salisbury, he spent far more of his life abroad than in England. In his boyhood he travelled in company with his parents; but from early manhood he roamed over the world by himself, visiting Russia, America and the Far East, acting as newspaper correspondent in the Crimea and again in the Franco-Prussian War, and coming through many strange and thrilling adventures. It is amazing to reflect that only half-a-century has passed since he found a mediæval system of civilisation prevalent in Japan, and since he barely escaped with his life from the extraordinary attack of Japanese swordsmen narrated in his *Episodes in a Life of Adventure* (1887). After his return wounded from the legation to Japan there followed the longest of his residences during manhood within the shores of

Britain. It was a period of literary and political activity. He was one of the founders of *The Owl*; his frequent papers in *Blackwood's Magazine* were among its most attractive features in the sixties; he was gathering the materials for his most remarkable book, *Piccadilly* (1870); from 1865 to 1867 he was member of Parliament for the Stirling Burghs. Then, suddenly, he resigned and went to America to join the religious community of the "Prophet" Thomas Lake Harris.

This action brings into startling prominence one of the two sharply-contrasted aspects of Oliphant's character. On the one hand, he was among the most practical of men, shrewd in business, a keen financier, a subtle diplomatist. On the other hand, he was a dreamer and a mystic, capable of surrendering himself to the most absurd delusions and, when under their influence, utterly destitute of judgment. This polished gentleman, accomplished writer and shrewd man of the world, pronounced Harris "the greatest poet of the age," and submitted to be, for the benefit of a vulgar schemer, what he disdained to be for his own sake,—an instrument for money-making. For not the least curious part of the strange story is that Oliphant's occupations as a member of the community were of the most worldly sort, and the most conspicuous difference between the life of religion, as he was instructed to lead it, and the life of the world, was that in the former the gains went to another man. Irritating however as is this connexion with Harris in the eye of common sense, it was just the combination of an enthusiasm bordering upon insanity with a keen practical intellect that made Oliphant the man of genius he was. The literary outcome of his religious enthusiasm is to be found in *Sympneumata* (1885) and *Scientific Religion* (1888), the former of which purports, and undoubtedly was believed by them, to be a revelation to his wife, which she dictated to him. They are not great books, but they are very remarkable psychological documents.

As a man of letters, Oliphant will rank neither as a religious philosopher, nor as a traveller, nor as a novelist, but as a satirist of society. His books of travel, *The Russian Shores of the Black Sea* (1853), *Episodes in a Life of Adventure*, &c., interesting

as they are, are not unique like Burton's. His *Piccadilly* and *Altiora Peto* (1883) have the form of novels, but not the reality. Their vitality lies in the satire which runs through them. English society is keenly analysed and criticised in *Piccadilly* and in *Fashionable Philosophy* (1887). In *The Autobiography of a Joint-Stock Company* America is treated in a similar way. As a satirist, Oliphant had the great advantage of adequate knowledge. To him, as one of the most fascinating personalities of the time, every grade of society was open. To a man so profoundly religious, a visionary who thought the world well lost for the guidance of the prophet Harris, the ideals of society seemed mean and sordid; and if society is justified in criticising what seem to be his aberrations, it might be worth its while considering whether there be not an element of truth in his criticism too.

Knowledge of the Far East was scanty when Laurence Oliphant published his *Narrative of the Earl of Elgin's Mission to China and Japan* (1859), but in the half-century which has since elapsed great additions have been made to it. As regards Japan, no one has contributed more than Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), a man remarkable alike for his life and for his writings. He owed his peculiar Christian name to the place of his birth, Leucadia in the Ionian Islands. From his youth he was a wanderer and a rebel against the conventions of society. In the beginning of his literary career he made his living by journalism on the staff of an American paper. What was wanted by the readers was scarcely literature; but Hearn was by instinct a man of letters, and in the teeth of circumstance he forced his way to recognition in the profession of his choice. His American experiences made him familiarly acquainted with the Southern States and with the French West Indies, about which he has written with great vividness and charm. But he had heard the call of the East, and, leaving America, he accepted a position as lecturer on English literature in the University of Tokio. He married a Japanese wife, adopted in great measure the habits of the people among whom he lived, and thus acquired an intimacy of knowledge such as none can hope to gain who are content to look on from the outside. There has lately been some exaggera-

tion of Hearn's literary merit, but his *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894), *Kokoro* (1896), *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields* (1897), *Japan: an Attempt at Interpretation* (1904), as well as his other works dealing with that country, are books of value alike for substance and for form.

If it is only occasionally that the traveller deserves notice as a man of letters, the cases are still more rare in which the pure sportsman does so. There are however three or four in this class whom it would be unjust to pass over. William Scrope (1772–1852) describes *The Art of Deer-Stalking* (1838) with a complete absorption in the subject, and a conviction of its sufficiency to satisfy the soul of man, which would move the most apathetic. John Colquhoun (1805–1885) in *The Moor and the Loch* (1840), though his English is not impeccable and his occasional verses are little better than doggerel, shows the spirit of the poet as well as of the sportsman, and gives fascinating descriptions of the arts of fishing and grouse-shooting as practised in their older and, as some hold, their finer forms in the Highlands of Scotland. Still greater praise is due to Charles St John (1809–1856), who added to the merits of Colquhoun a higher grade of accomplishment as a field naturalist, and whose *Wild Sports and Natural History of the Highlands* (1846), *Tour in Sutherlandshire* (1849) and *Natural History and Sport in Moray* (1863) are among the most delightful of all the books of their class. St John's best-known piece of work is the story of the Muckle Hart of Ben More, which was the means of first bringing him to the notice of men whom he, in his modesty, considered more literary than himself; but there is much besides in his books which is hardly less attractive than that admirable story. Finally, William Bromley-Davenport's *Sport* (1885), for its spirit and vivacity, well deserves a place beside these classics. In particular, the story of salmon-fishing in Norway is in its kind unsurpassed, and the speechless grief of the fisherman on the escape of the 'record' salmon is among the things which cannot be forgotten.

There is plainly a certain relation between these men and the author of *The Gamekeeper at Home* (1878), *Wild Life in a Southern*

County (1879), *The Amateur Poacher* (1879), *The Life of the Fields* (1884), and many other works of the same type. But in truth Richard Jefferies (1848–1887) belongs, not to the class of sportsmen, but to that of field-naturalists and observers, like Gilbert White of Selborne. There is a good deal of poetic feeling in the works named. This scion of a Wiltshire yeoman stock united in a degree scarcely paralleled the tastes of the observer of nature and of the man of books, and it is that union which gives him his place in literature. No English writer has ever possessed a more minute acquaintance with the facts of nature. But this, which is his strength, is also his weakness. His matter, in great part, is trivial, and many of the admired passages are little better than catalogues of the common sights and sounds of the country. The books are pleasant reading, but the reader who is not an expert in natural history will find that he has carried little away from them.

Perhaps it was a half-consciousness of this defect which led to a gradual change in the later works of Jefferies, to the introduction of a mystical element and to the freer play of imagination. This is exemplified in *Wood Magic* (1881) and in the later of his two books of autobiography, *The Story of my Heart* (1883). Its predecessor, *Bevis* (1882), the story of an imaginative boyhood, is a widely different production, which needs only concentration in order to rival even Mark Twain's admirable *Tom Sawyer*. The difference between this and *The Story of my Heart* brings out with great clearness one of the defects of Jefferies. Under an appearance of simplicity he conceals a high degree of sophistication. Accordingly, when he passes beyond childhood, he is not content to narrate the facts of his life; and in *The Story of my Heart* he seems to be perpetually straining after something which he cannot reach. If his books on nature chronicle small beer, they have the advantage over the mystical volumes in that they are more sincere and genuine.

It is desirable that the last name of all should be of greater weight than those which have just been mentioned; and it will be not unfit if it carries also that suggestion of mournfulness which we associate with the end of an age. The sense that here

and now is *fin de siècle* is illusory. Every year begins and ends a century; every year is the start as well as the close of an age. Yet what is never true of the whole may be true of the part. The individual dies though the race lives on; and there are phases and aspects of the work of the race too in which we see the evidence of decadence and death. Certainly never in recent years, perhaps never in the history of literature, have these been more conspicuous than in the case of Oscar Wilde (1854–1900). Mournfulness of the deepest is linked with his name, but so also is genius in a degree rarely surpassed in this generation. He is the gleaner of *fleurs de mal*. He brings to mind that creation of Hawthorne's weird fancy, the fungus brilliant but fatal, which can only grow from a dead man's heart.

The son of distinguished parents, Wilde seemed from boyhood to be marked out for a great career. At school, at Trinity College, Dublin, and at Oxford, he took without effort that foremost position which others win with sweat of brain. It would have been well for him had success been less easy. In his last and greatest book he tells how his mother had loved to quote Carlyle's translation of Goethe's lines,

> "Who never ate his bread in sorrow,
> Who never spent the midnight hours
> Weeping and waiting for the morrow,—
> He knows you not, ye heavenly powers."

He says that he had utterly rejected this doctrine, and loved only the sunny side of the garden of life. He learnt at last that life without shadow is as incomplete as life without sunshine. "Those who know what beauty is" had always interested him; he learnt to be interested also in "those who know what sorrow is." But before he did so his days were drawing to an end, and his great powers had been frittered away on work which was only occasionally worthy of them. His fatal defect is that he was, almost through life, what he calls himself, a *flâneur*, a *poseur*; and it is the sincere and the earnest which endures.

Even in what was best in the Oxford of Wilde's day there were elements which nourished the unwholesome part of his

nature. It was the time when Ruskin's influence was at its height; and Wilde was a disciple, but an eclectic one. The basis of Ruskin's aestheticism is ethical: Wilde adopted the aestheticism, but eliminated the morals. The affectations of the new aesthetic school are hardly worth recalling. Theirs was a religion of beauty alone. Art was to be cultivated for its own sake and not for anything extraneous. In Wilde's case we have proof from the start that there was affectation at the root of all this; from time to time some strong emotion sweeps the affectation away, and we feel the beating of the poet's heart. The noble apostrophe to England, *Ave Imperatrix*, was the product of such a moment, and is to be found in the early volume of *Poems* (1881), written in the full tide of the aesthetic movement. So is the touching and profoundly sincere *Requiescat*:—

"Tread lightly, she is near
Under the snow,
Speak gently, she can hear
The daisies grow.

All her bright golden hair
Tarnished with rust,
She that was young and fair
Fallen to dust.

Lily-like, white as snow,
She hardly knew
She was a woman, so
Sweetly she grew.

Coffin-board, heavy stone,
Lie on her breast,
I vex my heart alone,
SHE is at rest.

Peace, peace, she cannot hear
Lyre or sonnet,
All my life's buried here,
Heap earth upon it."

But Wilde far too seldom struck such notes, and though he was capable of rising above affectation, the habit of insincerity grew upon him and emasculated the greater part of his writings. The

bulk of his verse is over-wrought, and we tire of it, and long for something less sophisticated.

Wilde was versatile, and he soon turned aside from lyrical verse to prose and the drama. His dramas are productions of extraordinary skill and talent which have won a place in the esteem of continental critics scarcely rivalled by those of any contemporary English dramatist. *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1893) is a miracle of wit; and *A Woman of no Importance* (1894) and *The Importance of being Earnest* (1899) are monuments of almost exhaustless ingenuity and resource. They are all "trivial comedies for serious people." It pleased Wilde to pose as a trifler; but he was a trifler who thought, and there is often a wonderful suggestiveness in his lightest banter and his wildest paradox. In non-dramatic prose too Wilde showed the highest skill. He was an artist in words in whose person the traditional wit of his countrymen seemed to be concentrated. His stories and his critical essays alike are brilliant with epigram. *The Decay of Lying*, in the volume of critical essays entitled *Intentions* (1891), is hardly to be matched for pungent wit. Notwithstanding the air of *persiflage* it is easy to detect a serious purpose beneath. Occasionally, as in *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, which appeared in *The Fortnightly Review* in 1891, the seriousness comes close to the surface.

But the great overthrow which befell Wilde in 1895, his condemnation to imprisonment with hard labour for two years, made him almost a new man; and the two productions which we owe to that awful experience, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898), written after his release, and the prose work *De Profundis* (1905), which was composed in prison, overshadowed everything else he ever wrote. They are unique in English literature, perhaps in all literature; for probably no one else, gifted like Wilde, ever underwent such an experience.

These two works bring home to the most thoughtless the tragic difference which may underlie sentences verbally identical. Experience proves that habitual criminals, hardened by custom and coarse of nerve, may pass through periods of imprisonment longer than Wilde's with little change. But to the sensitive,

delicately-nurtured poet the two years stretched out into an age of agony. His whole mental horizon changes. If unreality is the vice of his earlier work, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* is even appallingly real. Though the style is rhetorical, the emotions which it expresses are grimly genuine; even Wilde's extraordinary cleverness could not have invented such feelings. Here at last the conventions of an artificial age are flung aside, and we are face to face with naked humanity. Even greater is *De Profundis*. Surely no such cry ever before came from the deeps. In contact with stern facts, Wilde unlearns all the philosophy of pleasure to which he had devoted his life, and is forced to acknowledge the truth of his mother's teaching. Almost, it would seem, he was delivered from his own nature. He stood on the verge of moral salvation. In thought at least he reached heights whither he had never soared in the days of his facile and brilliant success, and his greatest literary bequest is this cry of a soul in agony. But the trial which made him anew also broke him. He turned from the prison a doomed man, and some two years later, on November 30, 1900, he died,—he who had loved youth and dreaded age, old at forty-five. The curtain falls in gloom at once upon the century and upon the most brilliant figure of its closing years. But to him who reads *De Profundis* thoughtfully and sympathetically, it is a gloom which is flecked with light, a death which carries with it the promise of resurrection.

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What doesn't kill you makes you strong.
— Nietzsche.

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